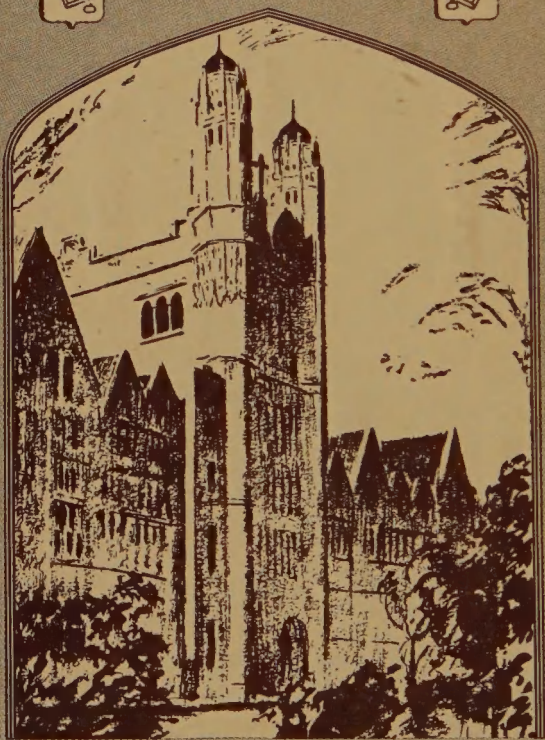


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The Saints

SAINT TERESA

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SAINT TERESA

(1515-1582)

BY
HENRI JOLY

TRANSLATED BY
EMILY M. WALLER



LONDON

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Authorised Translation

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To

MY DEARLY LOVED DAUGHTER

THÉRÈSE JOLY

IN RELIGION SISTER THÉRÈSE OF THE SACRED HEART

BORN AT DIJON, MAY 29, 1879

*She has succeeded in reconciling her father and
her mother to the great sacrifice she
asked of them*

NOTE

I MUST point out here the principal works or documents on which I have drawn for this book, and explain my manner of reference.

I. First and foremost come the writings of the Saint herself:—*Her Life*; *The Book of the Foundations*; *The Way of Perfection*; *The Interior Castle*.

These I quote from the translation by Father Bouix (Librairie Lecoffre), and since the editions are numerous, and the pagination of them may differ, I refer as a rule to chapters.

One of the most important sources is furnished us by her *Letters*. Of these the new edition of Father Grégoire de Saint-Joseph (3 vols. 8vo, Paris, 1900) is that to which I refer. Beyond question, this valuable publication sets right many interesting points and gives us a very large number of fragments which, if not all hitherto unpublished, in the strict sense of the word, had never been translated into French. As often as possible I have given the date of the letter: this gives facility, in certain cases, for referring to Father Bouix's translation.

Next come: *The Manner of Visiting Convents*, a pamphlet, 16mo (not on sale).

Rules and Constitutions of the Carmelites, a little 32mo (not on sale).

II. *General History of the Carmelite Friars and Nuns of the Reformed Order of St Teresa*, compiled in Spain by Father Francisco de Santa Maria, new translation (with notes) by Father Marie René. At present published 5 vols. 4to, Lérins Abbey, 1896 (not on sale).

Memoir on the Foundation, Government and Rule of the Discalced Carmelite Nuns, published on behalf of the Carmelite Nuns of the first convent of Paris, 2 vols. large 8vo, Reims, 1894 (not on sale).

Father Ribera, *Life of St Teresa* in 2 vols. 8vo, Paris, Lecoffre.

The *Bollandists*.

The Spain of St Teresa, an album composed of plates representing all the Carmels of Spain and various memorials of the Saint, with explanatory letter-press, published at Ghent by Mr. Hye Hoys (1893).

Finally, I cannot refrain from paying a debt of gratitude and of the highest esteem to the two volumes of the writer henceforth widely known under the humble name of the "Carmelite Nun of Caen" (Paris, Retaux, 2 vols. of 519 and 522 pages).

The fear of challenging too rashly a perilous comparison has been my chief reason for adopting in this work a less rigidly chronological order, in places where, in default of lengthy narrative, I have perhaps been able to bring into fuller light certain important passages in the life of the Saint.

The Feast of St Teresa,
Paris, 15th October 1901.

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

QUOTATIONS from St Teresa's writings have as far as possible, been put into the words of Abraham Woodhead's English translation, 4to, 1675.

Thanks are due to Dr Gray of Glasgow, for information respecting medical questions raised during the translation, and to Mr Harold Child of Brasenose College, Oxford, for help in other ways.

As a rule, proper names have been given in their original Spanish forms, rather than in French or English.

SAINT TERESA

CHAPTER I

IN THE WORLD (1515-1535)

IT is a most enchanting moment for all travelling from France to Madrid by the ordinary route through the Basque country and Old Castile, when the hill is reached upon which stands Avila. For long hours after leaving sight of the pointed spires of the Cathedral of Burgos, the traveller crosses monotonous plains whereon, it is said, the peasant may walk for a whole day without seeing any other shadow than that thrown by his mule and his whip. Very soon he must again endure the weariness of infinite stretches of sandy dunes surmounted by steep hills; from whence the grey, smooth masses of rock were taken to build the Escorial. But suddenly an oasis appears; it is not merely a rapid glimpse like that caught in passing the old tower of Arevalo; the train slackens speed, and the traveller can gaze at leisure upon plain after plain which stretch out before him broad and peaceful into the distance; nearer are green trees and rocks, which give an impression of changelessness: they enclose cultivated ground, and this, without looking quite modern, nevertheless suggests prosperity.

Several local industries upon the banks of a pretty winding river show that the town still thrives. In the midst of this landscape rises Avila, its outlines and shades of colouring restful in their dignity: the Knights' Avila, the Kings' Avila, the Saints' Avila.

Everything inside the town is antiquated and seems untouched. The ancient embattled walls with their towers, each standing on a base of rock, surround the whole of the town, without a break. Everything is dominated, overlooked and protected by the Cathedral, which ends in a half-moon intended to serve both as outlook and fortress, calling up to the traveller a vision of the times when, so to speak, prayer and fighting always went hand in hand.

When he enters the town, however, the illusion is here and there endangered by more than one squalid detail. But, on the other hand, it is maintained by the number of convents, the lofty manorial dwelling-houses, massive and picturesque, with arched doorways surmounted by gigantic stones that spread out in the shape of a fan, and immense entrance halls with solid walls pierced by narrow grated windows placed at such an imposing height they hardly show. The impression is still further deepened when the traveller enters the churches. There the Romanesque style of architecture chiefly predominates, and the worshipper is immediately veiled in such darkness that, in the midst of his first meditations, his sight and his spirit instinctively raise themselves to seek light from on high.

By degrees his eyes travel downwards to a place in front of the beautiful rose-window in the church

of San Pedro, where they are arrested by a monument which, modest as to its architectural dimensions, yet bears eloquent witness to the bygone glories of the city. On its various sides are inscribed the names of warriors by land and sea, of authors and poets, wise men and saints, born in Avila. This is the pedestal of the statue of that woman whom all Spain acclaims as pre-eminently "the saint." There she stands, clad in her Carmelite robes, queen of all those other great ones, Teresa y Ahumada.

She was born at Avila on the 28th March 1515, a fact of which she was proud all her life. She dearly loved the cool, bracing climate of Castile, and much preferred it to the humid softness of the Andalusian climate. But above all else she loved the loyalty, courage and staunch well-grounded piety of the people of her native province. "I have forgotten to tell you," she wrote to her brother who had just returned from the Indies, "what facilities you will find in Avila for giving your sons a good education. The Fathers of the Society of Jesus have a College where they teach children their grammar; they confess them regularly, and train them so well in the paths of virtue that it is truly a matter for which to thank God. They have likewise a course of philosophy. For theology the people go to the convent of Santo Tomás,¹ so that you can find all that you need both in knowledge

¹ It still exists, and is still occupied by Dominicans who teach there many novices. They show the grating where Saint Teresa used to confess.

and piety without going outside Avila. The town is so virtuous that everyone who comes to it from other parts is impressed by it. The people are much addicted to the practice of prayer and of confession ; and even those in the world lead perfect lives."

If she was proud of her birth-place she was equally proud of her sex. She well knew its weaknesses ; but she was not afraid to set forth her reasons why fathers and mothers should not be so distressed by the possession of more daughters than sons.¹ And indeed the women of Avila were no more wanting in courage than its men. "History relates how in a memorable instance they defended the town in the absence of their husbands, headed by the famous Chimène Vlasquez, who in reward for this noble deed received for herself and for every woman of her descendants, the privilege of sitting in the political assemblies."²

Truly this town was a worthy birth-place for so illustrious a saint.³

¹ See *The Foundations*, p. 235.

² *Gen. Hist.* i. 3.

³ In our day the descendants of Chimène Vlasquez and of St Teresa showed courage of another order. In 1868, at the time of the disturbances after the fall of Isabella, the convents were threatened once more and the Carmelite convent especially was thought to be in danger. The women of Avila thereupon protested most vigorously to Marshal Serrano. They invoked both the memory of their great compatriot and the promises of liberty made in the name of revolution. "Yea, your Excellency, we beseech you with one voice and with streaming eyes, in the name of the principle of association proclaimed by the Revolution, to leave those good souls in their convents ; ease our troubled minds, and you will thus powerfully contribute to the upholding of the principles of liberty" (*La libertad christiana* de Madrid, 4th Dec. 1868).

St Teresa's family was illustrious on both sides of her house. She boasted as little as possible of the fact; but, on the other hand, she ever loved to talk of the nobility of mind of her parents, and of the good qualities possessed by her brothers and sisters. We need not therefore be afraid to dwell on this point since she herself testifies to it.

“The having of vertuous Parents, and such as live in the fear of God, together with those favours which I received from his Divine Majesty, had been able to have made me good, if I had not been so very wicked. My Father was delighted in reading good Books; and used to have them in Spanish that so his Children might also read them. . . . My Father was a man of much charity towards poor people, and compassion towards the sick. He was a man of much truth. My Mother was also enriched with many vertues; and she passed through this life of hers with grievous sickness. And though she had an abundance of Beauty, yet was it never heard that she gave occasion for the world to conceive that she made any account of it at all. For, whereas she died when she was but three and thirty years old, her attire was such, as suited to persons much more aged. She was of a most sweet disposition, and much understanding. . . . We were three Sisters and nine Brothers; and all through the goodness of God were like our parents in being vertuous, except myself.” [See Abraham Woodhead's translation of *The Life of the Holy Mother St Teresa* (1675), chap. i.]

Her father, Alonso Sanchez de Cepeda, was twice

married. By his first wife, Catalina del Peso, he had three children, one of whom was Maria de Cepeda, of whom the saint speaks later in her *Life*, "I had a sister of inestimable virtue and perfect goodness." By his second wife, Beatriz y Ahumada, whose name Teresa bore according to the custom of those times, he had nine children: Fernando, who was a friend of Fernando Pizarro; Rodrigo, companion of Teresa's childhood, and of her childish plans for martyrdom, her favourite in short, who was drowned later in the Indies, leaving her heir to all his wealth; she came next in age, and was followed by Lorenzo, who, after his return from America, she converted to great piety, considering him from that time a religious though living in the world; after him were born Antonio, whom she persuaded to embrace the religious life before she herself entered upon her convent life, and who died during his noviciate with the Dominicans; Pedro, who went to the Indies and returned home with Lorenzo, only to distress his family by his "melancholy"; Geronimo, who died at Pérou, as she herself puts it, "like a saint"; Agustin, a distinguished captain, who, we are told, was victorious in seventeen battles against the inhabitants of Chili, but, being eager for glory and ambitious, he received a supernatural warning from his sister to the effect that his salvation would be endangered if he accepted fresh commissions: she died, and he forgot her words and went out again; but, when he reached Lima, he was struck down by a mortal illness, and, strengthened by the invisible presence of his blessed sister, he accepted his death with resignation, as the penalty

for his sins.¹ There was still another child, Juana, who is described by her sister as, "an angelic spirit." "My sister's disposition is filled with gentleness towards everyone; in my opinion she could not be angry with anyone: so gentle is her nature." It may be readily guessed that this gentleness of nature, which made of her "a martyr in this life," when she had lost her fortune, was not without its weak side: she did not always know how to control her children.

Although the various members of this worthy family were either brave or pious or gentle, we can easily foresee that Teresa was soon to surpass them all. She speaks of her natural abilities quite frankly, for it was a matter of conscience with her not to think herself better than she was, and it therefore never occurred to her to affect false modesty. "I was my father's favourite; and while my first innocence had not been sullied by sin his preference for me was not—I think—without some justification." She goes still further: "After this age of purity came the time when my eyes were opened to the beauties of nature, and God had been lavish to me in this respect, so they told me." To her beauty was added the charm of her character. "God has bestowed a great gift on me; everywhere I go, I am always looked on with delight."

She enjoyed the society of her playmates, but we see how even then religious thoughts began slowly

¹ "This is attested to by Fr. Luis de Valdivia, of the Society of Jesus, who confessed Agustin in his last illness, in his deposition in the matter of the canonisation of our Holy Mother" (*Gen. Hist.* i. 3).

but surely to mingle with her childish fancies. When playing with other little girls her great amusement was to build little monasteries. She played at being a nun just as her brothers in all probability played at being soldiers. Soon, however, a still greater desire took possession of her to become a hermit and dedicate her life to God. Teresa began quite differently from Ignatius of Loyola, who did not read lives of the saints until after he had read tales of chivalry. Teresa began at the former. She was especially impressed by the promise that rewards whether for good or evil should last for ever. "We chanced to speak often of this, and we took pleasure in repeating these words many times: For ever, for ever, for ever." She held that the suffering endured for such a short space of time by the martyrs was a cheap price to pay for a happiness that was to endure everlastingly. When she was seven years old she persuaded her brother Rodrigo, who was only a very little older than herself, to go with her, begging their bread as they went, into the country of the Moors, where the infidels were to send them to a blessed death and everlasting glory. They even got as far as Ajara, then at the turning in the hilly road¹ they were met by an uncle and taken back home. When reprimanded by his mother Rodrigo excused himself, although the older, and threw the blame on *nina* (little one) who had suggested the idea, and insisted on his going with her.

These two were great friends and both religiously

¹ At this spot, it is said there stands a sort of monument (possibly commemorative of this event) composed of several columns.

inclined; they built little monasteries in their father's garden, where they recited the Rosary together. Teresa, in particular, never ceased dreaming on the fulness of an illimitable and unshadowed perfection. She kept a picture in her room of the Samaritan woman talking with Jesus and saying: "Lord give me this water that I thirst not." She loved to look at it and give offerings to it "when she was able."

In the midst of this childish fervour, which had already raised her beyond the ordinary thoughts of her age, when she had scarcely reached her tenth year, she lost her mother. We will give her own words: "As soon as I began to understand how great a loss I had sustained by losing her, I was very much afflicted; and so I went before an image of our Blessed Lady, and besought her with many tears that she would vouchsafe to be my mother."

The death of her earthly mother left her to the care of a father, not better, perhaps, but more judicious than she had been, and a sister-in-law well fitted to take the mother's place. Unfortunately, Beatriz de Ahumada had loved stories of chivalry and allowed her daughter to read them unknown to, or against the wishes of the head of the family. These "romances" were very different from the books that bear that name to-day, but they led astray the imagination of the little Teresa, who began at once, with the assistance of Rodrigo, to compose them. From this time, according to her own confession, arose a coolness towards "good things," and an awakening to worldly ideas. She began to dress finely and became something of a

flirt, and was anxious to "look well," sparing to that end neither perfumes nor "any of those vanities" which, if we are to believe her word, she was "very curious" in devising.

In the meantime her cousins-german (her father, she says, would allow no others) often came to the house. "In all things which gave them contentment, I was willing to uphold discourse; and gave ear to the successes of their loves, and their dreams for the future." A still more dangerous acquaintance, with a kinswoman who was frivolous in behaviour and indiscreet in her conversation, came to imperil, not indeed her moral worth, which never ran the least risk, nor her faith or religious habits, but the warmth of her piety. We cannot explain this more clearly than she herself has done. "Till I began to be familiar with her I am much inclined to think that I never was addicted to much ill (for even naturally I abhorred such things as concerned dishonesty); nor lost the fear of His Divine Majesty; though yet still, I feared more to lose my honour. This had power enough with me, for not permitting me to lose it outright; nor do I conceive that anything of this world could make me change that resolution; nor could the affection to any person whatsoever have caused me to render it up. I would to God I had so abounded in strength and courage as not to make one pace against the honour of His Divine Majesty; as even a kind of natural constitution of mind confirmed me towards the not losing that wherein I held the honour of this world to consist. . . . For

the vain upholding hereof I had ever an extreme resolution: though yet for the proper and fit means, which was necessary for the preserving it, I used none at all; only I was earnest in taking care that I might by no means lose myself outright.”¹

Three months—she gives us the exact particulars—passed by in complete forgetfulness of her former fervour; long enough for her own liveliness and charm to combine with the malice of another in casting a slight slur on her reputation. Her father took alarm and decided to place her quietly as a boarder at the Convent of the Dames Augustines. The marriage of her half-sister furnished an effectual pretext against any suspicion of harshness or mistrust on his part.

As it was the custom with her countrywomen, Teresa had often stayed at convents before this time, and there is no doubt she entered them in a sincerely religious spirit. The nuns who survived her loved to recall little incidents of her visits among them. “I recollect particularly,” one of them thinks it worth while to relate, “that she wore an orange coloured dress edged with black velvet,” and she added—what she cared much more about—“Her kinswoman, Doña Maria de Cepeda, relates what follows. She was returning from a walk one morning with the holy mother when the latter said to her:

¹ *Life*, chap. ii. Let us add, to prevent returning to the subject, that she preserved this immunity from temptations to sins of the senses all her life. She says later in one of her *Relations* (*Letters*, iii. 429), “There was nothing about her but what was absolutely chaste and pure.”

‘O! sister, how happy you would be if you knew who was the squire that escorted us!’ I asked her who this squire might be. The holy mother replied: ‘Christ bearing His Cross.’”¹

Nevertheless, at first she felt her entry into the convent as a boarder to be “cruelly irksome”; elsewhere too she says the life of the cloister was “strongly repugnant” to her, and she felt a “deadly aversion” for it. She dreaded “some of their rules,” though admiring and loving the nuns, whom she found “models of goodness, discipline and holy recollection.” Several frank expressions betray how, for a year and a half, her secret thoughts turned this way and that, and how gradually she shook off her sadness. She was troubled by certain “messages,” which she believed were temptations from the devil, suggesting an “honourable alliance.” The thought of the ties of marriage inspired her with alarm; yet when she asked the sisters to pray that her vocation might be clearly revealed to her, she made certain secret reservations, for she hoped that it might not be God’s will to call her to the religious life. But this fear gradually subsided in its turn. The change in her feeling is particularly evident in her conversations with the directress of the boarders, whose character satisfied both her natural tastes and her leaning towards piety. This

¹ *Letters*, iii. towards the end. She was still too young for us to be able to believe that this was one of those visions or spiritual contacts which were so frequent in her later life. It is more likely to have been an act of the imagination, half pious reverie, half gentle raillery, at the absence of a squire of flesh and blood.

nun, Maria Briceño, "combined holiness with rare discretion and the gift of discourse."¹ The young pupil bears witness on her own behalf that all her life she had experienced an indescribable delight at hearing discourse of God. But hearing Him fitly discoursed of, without insipidity or vulgarity, but fully and firmly, we might even say gracefully, can have brought nothing but pleasure to one who was always to be indebted to her own high charity for patience in listening to a bad preacher. She gave herself up willingly therefore to that influence which was to outweigh all others and revive in her that "study of and desire after things eternal" with greater enthusiasm than ever.

It was indeed by this means that she was led into the paths, first, of fear (if we are to trust her humble estimate concerning the vagaries of her young days), later, we cannot doubt, of love. This was what dispelled her prejudices against the habits and rules which, rightly appreciated, are intended to produce forgetfulness or indifference to all that happens in the world outside.

Many times in her after life, as founder of convents, she was to deal with the vocations of young Spanish women who threw themselves into the monastic life in some sudden impulse of heroism, cloaking the humility that was necessary to their sacrifice with something of their racial pride. She admired Catalina de Sandoval who at fourteen scornfully rejected every suitor offered to her, thinking it strange her friends should wish to put her

¹ *Life*, iii.

in subjection to such men, and secretly amazed that her father should demand so little of them; when suddenly, her eyes falling on a crucifix, a miraculous light shone into her soul. She admired also Casilda de Padilla, while at the same time prophesying her probable weakness in a not very far distant future. Casilda was passionately attached to her lover, and was surprised to find herself overcome every evening by deep sadness at the thought that one more day had gone by, that all others would pass one by one just the same, and her happiness must have an end:—she thereupon set to work at once to ensure her salvation and eternal welfare by taking shelter from the world. We have said that Teresa admired these examples. It would perhaps be more correct to say that she adored these signal strokes of grace. She herself, while in no way behind these young girls in self-sacrificing enthusiasm, yet took more time and drew her courage from deeper wells. She debated her vocation for three years or more, and sought counsel from the writings of the greatest intellects, in order to weigh the question with the most conscientious pains.

After eighteen months' residence with the Dames Augustines she was obliged to leave the convent through serious illness. She was taken to the house of her sister Maria.¹ There she gratefully received the loving care which all lavished upon her, but nothing could avail to shake the resolution she had already taken in secret. She certainly underwent at this time, as she tells us, the severest attacks of

¹ At the beginning of 1533, says the *General History*.

doubt experienced throughout her whole life, and the bouts of fever which racked her and the fainting fits that followed them were not calculated to strengthen her to resist such doubts: for involuntarily she asked herself whether her delicate health could bear the severities of a convent life. But she consistently refused to see in that fear anything but a temptation, which she was determined to resist to the bitter end. She was upheld by the helpful conversations of an uncle and by the reading of religious books in his company.

She returned home where family events—the departure of two of her brothers (one of them the little Rodrigo) for Pizarro's army in the Indies—were to draw her thoughts in other directions. The effect on herself, we may well believe, was only a further advance towards early maturity.

At length she read a book that settled her doubts once and for all, the Epistles of St Jerome. The flaming passion of those letters, the pungent satire they heaped on life in the world, the piercing appeal of their praise of the life religious had won to solitary meditation and asceticism patricians like Eustochium and Paula: from the moment that St Teresa read them her mind was definitely made up, and to the better part. To use the language of the Bollandists it was no longer a question of acting from emotion (*ad sensualitatis consolationem*), but of deliberate will. She decided to give up everything to the search after her soul's highest welfare. Let us hear her own words: "Already I was grown to love good books; and so I came to read the Epistles of St

Jerome, which helped me to such heart and courage, as to make me resolve that I would impart my purpose to my Father; which in effect, was even as much for me, as to take the very Habit upon me. For I was ever so affected to maintain the point of Honour, that me-thinks I could never have turned back again upon any terms when I had once said it." Her father objected strongly, for he wished to keep her with him until his death; but this only led her to take a step which showed how imperative was her desire. Accompanied by one of her brothers—the one who became a Dominican through her influence—she sought admittance in the Convent of the Encarnacion.

It was not, however, one of those impulsive acts which imply a wilful blindness to every cause of hesitation and of regret. Let us once more listen to her own words. "I remember (to the uttermost of what I can call to mind, and in very truth) that whilst I was going out of my father's house, I believe the sharpness of sense will not be greater in the very instant, or agony of my death, than it was then. For it seemed to me, as if every bone which I had in my body, had been disjointed from all the rest. There was no such love of God in me at that time, as was able to quench that love which I bore to my Father and my Friends."

But she managed to hide from everyone the violence of her mental conflict: "no one saw aught in me but an unshaken courage." Her courage indeed gained the upper hand, and the victory was crowned by a feeling of happiness and peace which

dispelled all her old fears, and after a time reconciled her beloved father to the step she had taken.

.

Before we follow her in the religious life which was to bear so many miraculous fruits of grace, we will pause for a moment to examine closely the equipment of natural gifts which fitted her, from a purely human point of view, for the life of sacrifice before her.

The Jesuit Father Ribera, who took his turn among her confessors, her confidant, counsellor, and friend, has been at some pains to leave a minute description of her personal appearance. His description is not strictly applicable to her youth, but the girl may be divined from the features of the woman of mature age.

“She was tall in figure. Although strikingly beautiful in her youth, she looked much more beautiful in later life. She was stout, and her skin was exceedingly white. Her face was round, plump, very well featured, and very finely proportioned. Her complexion was like lilies and roses, it lighted up when she was praying, and she looked exquisitely beautiful. Her face was indescribably pure and expressive of heavenly peace. Her hair was dark and curly; her forehead broad and smooth and very beautiful. Her eyebrows were auburn, well marked and slightly arched; her eyes were black and round and full, and of ordinary size, but well set and full of life and gentleness; liveliness danced in them when she smiled, and they reflected gravity when she was in graver mood; her nose

was small and slightly raised in the middle and round at the end and rather turned down: her nostrils were small and curved; her mouth was neither large nor small—the upper lip thin and straight, the lower thick and rather drooping; her teeth were good and her chin of good shape and proportion; her ears were of medium size; her neck was thick and rather short; her hands were small and very beautiful; she had three little marks on the left side of her face which gave her much charm, one was rather more than half-way down her nose, the second between her nose and mouth, and the third below her mouth. . . . In fact everything about her seemed perfect. Her carriage was queenly, and her walk both graceful and dignified: she was so lovable, so gentle, that only to look at her and to hear her speak made one love and reverence her.”¹

To what factor must we give the greatest weight in the persevering struggle which drove her into the conventual life? To a very emotional temperament? Or to a quick, passionate and overwhelming imaginative faculty? And were those in fact the leading powers of her mind? Beyond question, her nature was exceptionally intense and richly endowed; and we must carefully avoid taking her too literally when, for example, she tells us that her feeling of compas-

¹ *Ribera*, vol. ii. chap. i. We will say very little about her portraits. The least unauthentic is at Seville, and was probably the work of the lay brother Juan de la Miseria; it is by a painter of inferior merit, and was done when the saint was getting old. She was not very well pleased with it.

sion toward the afflicted was a gift direct from God, and a gift that came none too quickly;¹ or again, when she says that she was not naturally inclined to pity; in fine, that she did not know how to use her imagination, which she deplored as "sluggish." We are quite accustomed to hearing people of superior natures complain, in all good faith, of just those very qualities which render them the most valuable services; they are never satisfied, partly because their demands are for ever increasing, and partly because the very benefits they receive from them are incitements to unlimited exaction. We gather, however, from the saint's own analyses of her intellectual history (and in this case we may believe her word) that her sensitiveness—by which we mean her capacity for enjoying and suffering—rather increased than diminished as she passed from youth to mature age. We have only to add that in mature years, as in youth, she knew how to control its expression, and, when necessary, to conceal its secret troubles from all eyes. We must also bear in mind that her imagination was her slave rather than her master. All the statements that she has left, show clearly that she could hold her imagination in check under the control of an understanding that longed for doctrine. When schooling herself to habits of contemplation she found it difficult to do without a book; and her thoughts were apt to stop short at the mysteries connected with our Lord's humanity. In fact, she was dependent upon the actual presence of people

¹ *Letters*, iii. pp. 372 *et seq.*

and things and surroundings. The creations of her brain did not satisfy her; she needed picturesque spots before her eyes, just as in earlier days she had asked for pictures "which should be pretty to look at." It was only in after years that celestial visions seemed more beautiful to her than any of the beauties of nature.¹ But even then she returned more than once to her old love of the beautiful, as we see in her choice of pretty sites for monasteries. She would never allow one to be built where the scenery was unattractive; nor could she help exclaiming to Juan de la Misericordia, when he had finished painting her portrait; "May God forgive you, Brother Juan, for making me so ugly!"

Had she remained in the world she might have become a writer, noted exclusively for beauty of style. But, indeed, even in this respect was she not one of the glories of the age?

Her poems are monotonous because she kept to one subject at a time, and scorned any "variations" by the introduction of subsidiary ideas; they are, however, broken by antitheses and climaxes which plainly reveal the Spanish taste. This taste is still more noticeable in the many incidents described at length in her books. But throughout her writings there is a clearness of style, a penetrative power, a self-reliance—even when she is carried away by the raptures, scarcely short of frenzy, of love, which gives her a right to a place among the classic writers of all nations and tongues.

How does Ribera sum her up? "Her judgment

¹ *Letters*, iii. p. 359. (She was then forty-five years old.)

was calm and never ruffled by rash impulse, but always ripe and wise. She reflected before she acted, and never acted without full knowledge of the consequences. . . . Her courage was far above that of her sex; it was of such manly strength that she succeeded in all her aims, and with God's help mastered her natural passions."

Such were the choice mental endowments that this clear-eyed and courageous girl was about (we were tempted to say) to bury out of sight in a convent. Let us say rather that she was dedicating them to be developed and bear fruit in a life all in God, and all for God.

CHAPTER II

THE EARLY YEARS OF TERESA'S RELIGIOUS LIFE

FOLLOWING certain probabilities which seem definitely to dispel all other conjecture,¹ it was on the 2nd November 1535, at the age of twenty, that Teresa entered the Convent of the Encarnacion. She went there to meet one of its inmates, a nun to whom she was greatly attached, Juana Suarez; but what she really sought there was not, as we have seen, the enjoyment of earthly affection, nor even mental peace, but welfare of her soul and greater assistance to the serving of her God. We shall see to what extent she found them, when the terrible ordeal of the first day of her convent life was passed.

The huge convent, which still stands almost intact,² contained a great number of sisters. In a letter of

¹ I pass rapidly over the problems of chronology, and the long discussions which they have raised. I have based my opinion: first, upon a narrative in which St Teresa writes in 1575: "It is forty years since this nun (herself) took the veil"; for the veil was then taken immediately on entering; second, upon a manuscript narrative which Father Grégoire de Saint Joseph saw in the Convent of the Encarnacion, which definitely gives the date as November 2nd, 1535. See *Letters*, iii. p. 419 and note.

² The chapel has been enlarged to the detriment of the old cell which belonged to the saint, but the reception rooms remain as they were.

1581, St Teresa gives exact particulars: "Before I began my foundations I lived for twenty years in a convent which contained 180 nuns." It was a large number, and, as we shall see later, the great reformer refers several times to the extreme difficulty of keeping so many women together. Meanwhile her work rather lay in solitude, although she spent it in a hidden service for others. In this same letter she gives, in the form of advice to her correspondent, an epitome of the system which she herself adopted. "You ought so to order your thoughts as to see no one besides God and yourself in your convent. Keep quietly to yourself whenever your duties do not oblige you to mingle with others; copy the virtue that you see in each one of the sisters and love it for itself; finally, never think of the faults of your neighbours except to take warning by them. This is how I learnt to practise goodness. The large number of sisters troubled me no more than if there had been none at all; for indeed we can love God, the Lord of all, no matter where we are, and no creature can prevent us from doing so." We must certainly consider here the lecture which St Teresa gave to a nun who tried, unsuccessfully however, to leave her convent, to gain admission into one of the new foundations. She had, no doubt, alleged in excuse the hindrances that she encountered in her intercourse with so many sisters. The saint would not take her in—it was against the rules—but instructed her how to make the best of her present situation. She recognised that there were difficulties to be overcome here as in so many other cases. It

was in this same spirit and with the same subtle delicacy of perception that she once said: "The desire for solitude is worth more even than solitude itself."

She did not, however, allow herself to be absorbed by prayer, still less by the host of minor observances. "I am no great believer in making many signs of the Cross," she said once confidentially. And still more plainly yet:¹ "I have never liked nor been able to put up with certain devotions wherein are all sorts of ritual in which women especially find an attraction, which leads them astray." Her taste, then, was all for the "approved means of Prayers," but on the other hand she had a practical love for acts of charity, and sought for opportunities to perform them. To this we have independent testimony. "If on self-examination at night in her oratory, she found she had not done one single act of charity throughout the day, she went to the choir and mended all the cloaks needing it that she found left on the *prie-dieu*. At other times she took a lantern to light the staircase, so that the sisters who were walking in the dark should not stumble, or gave a light to those who wanted it. When she has occasion to mention a Carmelite afflicted with a terrible internal sore, whom she nursed most tenderly, she passes quickly on and gives us nothing of the incident beyond some words of praise for the poor invalid: "her illness frightened the others, while I felt envious of her invariable patience."

She continued her solid reading, and it is evident

¹ *Life*, vi., cf. Ribera, vol. ii. pp. 4, 22.

that from this time she read the *Moralia* of St Gregory the Great with deep attention. So, strengthened by doctrine and practice she learnt to acquire a zealous taste for all those "observances" of the cloister life, from which she had at first shrunk back in alarm. But if we may believe her own word for it, she found it a much harder thing to learn true humility of spirit: she did not at all like being found fault with;¹ and was charmed with proofs of esteem. Yet she began to "weep over her sins," and was moved to tears by pious exercises. In this respect most likely, as in others, she was already in advance of most of the inmates of the convent, which, she tells us, "was not founded in much perfection," and where the venial or grave shortcomings of the penitents found somewhat too ready an indulgence with the confessors.² Moreover, the nature and the cause of her tears were not generally understood: they were attributed either to discontent or regrets.

A certain amount of melancholia, it is true, mingled with these mystical griefs of hers. The altered mode of life, the severe discipline, and, without question, a cause which we cannot explain,³

¹ She declares, too, that many of the rebukes she received were quite undeserved.

² To be strictly accurate we must state that she was more severe in her censures on the regular confessors attached to the Convent of the Encarnacion than she was on their penitents. It is certain, too, that among the latter were many nuns of the highest character. *General History*, I, ii.

³ She tells us in express terms that she asked God to send her an illness, and that He had listened to her request. But what

gradually brought her into a state of health that at last ended in a serious illness. The Convent of the Encarnacion not being subject to strict closure, her father obtained leave to send her to Bécédas with her great friend Juana Suarez, where she was to be under the ministrations of a woman who practised healing. They set out in October 1538,¹ but the winter was not considered a favourable time for the cure. She therefore stopped with her pious uncle once more at Hortigosa; here she became acquainted with a book which she constantly turned to afterwards, "The Third Abecedary" of the Franciscan Francisco de Ossuna. It was a treatise on prayer. She was not removed to Bécédas until the spring, when her father and

was the nature of that affection? A detailed report by Dr Goux, of the Society of Saint Luke (a Parisian association of Christian doctors), adopts the conclusion that the malady by which St Teresa was attacked at the age of twenty-one was a morbid manifestation of impaludism [*i.e.* malaria]; and that she suffered from a condition of severe nervousness, of which the cause might with probability be attributed to cachexia [*i.e.* weak bodily condition] of malarial origin, which aggravated the anæmic cachexia [*i.e.* weak bodily condition due to bloodlessness]. The most precise statement which she herself gives is that she had "a double quartan fever" [*i.e.* an attack of malaria in which there are two series of paroxysms: those of one series being all similar, but unlike those of the other series—thus the paroxysms of one series will occur on the first, fourth, seventh day, and so on—those of the other series will occur on the second, fifth, eighth day. It is a very rare form of the disease].

¹ Those who put forward the date of the year of her entry into orders also place the year of this journey later. The date given by the *General History* is 1538 (edit. of 1896).

sister and Juàna Suarez took her there with the utmost precautions.

Very soon after her arrival there occurred an episode upon which she herself has thought right to dwell with an interesting mingling of openness and of delicacy. She met a priest of high birth and much natural intelligence, but who had been indifferently educated, and whose morality was still worse. Whilst still officiating at the altar he was carrying on an illicit intimacy with a woman, who, to keep him strictly enslaved to her, made him wear round his neck a little copper charm which it seems "she had bewitched." This priest, who had some remnant of faith and devotion left, was profoundly disturbed by what he saw of his penitent's deep love for God and her extremely devout repentance for sin. "I being then so very young, it put him to a kind of confusion to see it"; and she adds: "through the great affection which he bore me, he began to discover his own misery to me, which was not small. . . . When I came to understand this story I had great compassion for him, for I loved him much.' She obtained from him the little charm, which she threw away, and he believed himself instantly delivered from the spell.

It cannot be doubted that the feeling the guilty man had for the young Carmelite from that time changed in character. She recognised that his affection had been quite honourable in intention, but she admits that "it might have been more pure." In other words, he felt he was in the

presence of a soul which was not only holy, but far-seeing and of resolute will, and was overcome with a salutary respect. She, on her side, saw the opportunity to turn the mingled feelings with which she had inspired him to a useful and legitimate account, and lead the sinner gently from his old life to a new one. A purer earthly love might perhaps prepare him for the love of God; and this was indeed what happened. But St Teresa admits that she thought later she had been rather imprudent. She sums up the incident in a few lines: "There was no want of occasions, wherein, if the presence and assistance of God had not been close at hand, His Divine Majesty might have been much offended. But, whatsoever I might then have conceived to be mortal sin, I would certainly not have committed it; and even his feeling that disposition in me, might, perhaps, make him love me the better. For, all men, I believe, are more the friends of those women, whom they see inclined to virtue; yea, and even, when they do pretend to this, such women gain more upon such men. . . . But I hold it for very certain, that his soul is in the way of salvation; for he died very well, and clearly freed from this occasion. It seems, our Lord was pleased that he should be saved, by my means."

She persevered in the treatment that her friends had brought her there to try; it was as drastic as it was senseless, and very nearly killed her. After three months of all sorts of remedies and medicines, consumed by fever and loathing, and terribly de-

pressed by her intense weakness, there was hardly a breath of life left in her. She was taken back to her father's house, and there for over four months she continued to suffer a veritable martyrdom of pain. She had been anxious to make her confession in preparation for the Feast of the Assumption. But her father, although "so devoted a Catholic," would not allow her confessor to see her for fear of alarming her about her condition; he was soon filled with remorse, for that very evening a crisis set in which lasted for four days, and her nurses thought she was now dying, now dead. Her grave was dug at the convent ground, and left open a day and a half. But she came back to life again; and, as if waking from a trance, she seemed by certain words¹ that fell from her to reveal the secret of sublime visions.

Always an accurate and keen observer of all connected with herself and others, St Teresa gives us a description of her illness at that time which we ought to study:—

"I remained, during those four days of Agony, or Trance, in such state, that only our B. Lord is able to know the unsufferable torments which I felt in my self. My tongue was deeply bitten by me, in many places. My throat, with having taken nothing, and by reason also of my very great weak-

¹ She disavowed them afterwards as merely the incoherent ravings of a sick brain; a thing she never did in the many other instances. She could always tell the different states through which she passed, and never lightly admitted any supernatural agency—no matter how strong the evidence in its favour. This we shall see more fully as we proceed.

ness, could not swallow so much as a drop of water, without choaking. Me thought I was totally dis-joynted; and my head in extream disorder. I was also, as it were, all rowled up, and contracted, as if I had been a Bottom of Pack-thread; for, in this, did the torments of those days terminate themselves, without my being able once to stir either hand, or foot, arme, or head (unless they moved me), any more, than as if I had been dead. Only, I think, I was able to wag one single finger of my right hand. Now, for any body to touch me in any kind, there was no means at all; for, my whole person was so affected and afflicted, as that there was no enduring to have it touched. In a sheet, they would be removing me, now, and then, according to the occasion, with one, at one end thereof, and another, at the other; and this lasted till Easter. Only this I had, by way of ease; that if I were not approached, and touched, these torments would relent many times, and then upon the account of my being in less pain I was content to affirm myself to be well. But indeed, I was much afraid, lest my patience should begin to fail me; and therefore, I was not a little pleased, to find my self without those sharp and continual torments; though yet, in the cold fits of a double quartan, which I had very violent, I had these pains still after an unsupportable manner; together with a very great detestation of food."

Certain characteristics there described would suggest some nervous malady to the medical mind of to-day, probably hysteria. By those who regard

a disease as characterised by a correlated sequence of symptoms determining each other and producing a complete *ensemble*, such a hypothesis must be rejected. The intermittent fever lasted so long, its effects on the patient (aggravated by the barbarous treatments used) were so terrible, that it is quite impossible to say that at any moment she was the victim of a specific nervous disease. She was delicate throughout her life and hardly passed a day without suffering; but unquestionably she was neither selfish nor indifferent, and had neither the mental aberration nor the disinclination to rational pursuits and absorption in puerile and ridiculous things which are all indispensable psychological symptoms of the "diathesis" under consideration. Furthermore she showed none of the stock physical symptoms such as the hysterical lump in the throat, sobbing, sighing, convulsions, and "clownish" attitudes: we may be very sure she had watched all such symptoms in others, and knew them well enough to describe them, and at the same time to declare most emphatically that she had never experienced them herself.¹

¹ "I think I have said" (she writes in chapter ii. of the *Fourth Mansions in the Interior Castle*), "concerning spiritual consolations that they are sometimes mixed with our Passions, and they carry with them certain fits of sobbing; and I have heard tell of some whose Breasts have bin straitned thereby, and certain external motions likewise have followed, which they could not stop; and this with such violence, as to make the Blood gush out at their Nose, with such other painful accidents. Of this I can say nothing, because I have not tried it"

A famous doctor, Prof. Grasset, claims, it is true, to find a certain number of different hysterias, according as the affection is localised here or there. Thus he distinguishes cerebral hysteria (the

She was still tortured with her illness when she wished to return to the convent, and after she went back to it. But she knew well how to turn her suffering to account, and felt new virtues spring up in her, and even found pains a safeguard for her soul. Although quite unfit to perform active deeds of charity, she could at any rate advocate them in her conversation. So faithful was she to keep this resolution, that by degrees the other nuns, who had hitherto, it seems, been given too much to the sin of slander, "contracted the same habit" through her influence and example. She knew the contrition of heart of a soul that is hungering after perfection, and grief-stricken because it is unable to do enough in return for God's grace. "But now," she tells us, "this never happened to me, either more or less, for any fear at all, but only when I remembered those regalo's [favours], which our Lord hath been pleased, to vouchsafe me, in my Prayer; and the very much, that I owed His Divine Majesty, for those high

commonest), bulbar hysteria, and hysteria of the spinal cord. He even carries the analysis still further; he describes particular forms according as to whether the disease affects by preference the anterior or the posterior columns, etc. At this rate it would be easier to find in the case of St Teresa, for example, bulbar hysteria to the exclusion of cerebral hysteria. . . . But it should not be forgotten that these particular conditions always heighten a general habit which is not transitory, and which manifests itself regularly by such phases as, to use a familiar expression, "tout y passe." This is certainly not the case with St Teresa.

I will limit myself to referring here to what I have said on these accusations of hysteria in my *Psychology of the Saints*. The progress of the present study will furnish us besides with more than one opportunity of making the exact truth more clear.

Favours; and when I saw how ill I paid him for all His goodness, I was not able to endure it." Far from allowing her mind to wander in darkness, she never lost an opportunity of drawing light from the purest sources. "The reading of good books is my dearest delight." Far from complaining about her illness, or exaggerating it (as is the way with most hysterical sufferers), she longed to be cured of it. But on what grounds? So that she could take an active part in serving God. Therefore she entreated St Joseph to rid her of her "languishing state of body." In this way began that special devotion to St Joseph, which she was afterwards to propagate perseveringly and successfully throughout the whole Catholic world. But she takes care to tell us that she avoided every ceremony which savoured of superstitious practice. At length after prolonged prayers, and the offering of many masses on the altar of her special Saint, she rose from her sick-bed, and was able to walk, and resume her place and her occupations, among the sisters of the convent.

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She resumed them with such energy that, in sharing the common life, she soon became engrossed in what, with pious exaggeration, she afterwards called its dissipations, its pastimes, its vanities. The faults she censured in such severe terms were, at the outset, a certain freedom of conduct, and too great independence in the use of her time. She decorated her oratory, and filled it with pictures; she gave her attention to beautiful work; for she

said in reference to this subject, "I knew well enough (so vain I was) how to win esteem for myself, by those things which the world is wont to prize." The charm of her youth which was made still more interesting by the illness from which she had hardly recovered, her wit and good-nature, and her piety which was even then striking, all combined to make her greatly beloved, and to secure for her as much and even more liberty than the older nuns. Thence also arose that most fruitful occasion for remorse—her pleasure in receiving visitors. These sociable receptions in the monasteries were a Spanish custom, and a rendezvous for the society of Avila. St Teresa affirmed that in other convents—whose names she withholds—this abuse was even greater than at the Encarnacion. Not only were these interviews permitted, they were even encouraged, especially with people of distinction, whose intercourse with her added yet more to her renown. When therefore an older and so more experienced Carmelite nun, one greatly devoted to God's service, cautioned her not to fall into this snare, the young sister did not take the advice graciously: this, she thought, was to take offence without cause.

Wherein did the harm consist which she was so soon to perceive? Why, in the waste of time! There was nothing worse in it; that she expressly states; but the recollection of this wasted time would make her weep in after life. The hours so frittered away were hours which she had begun to give and ought to go on giving to her Lord. Although gifted with special grace, she no longer responded to it

as hitherto. Such was the nature of her "crime," and she has put herself to great trouble to demonstrate to her astonished readers that this was the only one she had committed. A young, newly married woman allows herself to be absent from her husband unnecessarily. After a time she recalls that an unusually tender affection had united them and she writes: "What happy moments that we had dreamt of passing together are lost through my fault!" This exclamation of regret conveys but a feeble idea of those uttered again and again by the great Carmelite while she implores God's pardon for having neglected Him so long.

What chain of events, internal and external, natural and supernatural, brought her out of this condition of indifference, or, as she calls it, dissipation? She can explain it better than anyone else. Let us therefore once again fall back upon her own words.

To begin with, she had two visions in succession: in the first the Divine Master appeared to her "with much rigour." Was this an hallucination? It was not: for, putting the matter beyond question, as we shall often find her doing, she says on two distinct occasions that she saw it much more plainly with her spiritual eyes than she could have done with her bodily eyes. But she thought it was a mere delusion, with no celestial origin, and continued to hold her receptions.

Another time whilst talking with the nun before mentioned, a woman of high rank, she and the other visitors present saw a kind of monster, like an

extraordinarily huge toad, but much more rapid in its movements than any ordinary toad. "I was not able to conceive how such a filthy beast as that should get into that room, through that part, from whence it came; and even, at noon-day; nor had ever any such thing been seen there. The effect, which it wrought in me, seems not to have been void of some mystery."

To this external influence the Saint responded at length in that "second state" so well described by St Ignatius, into which she threw the strongest originality of her character. Let us hear her too. Her words are plain enough. God never ceased to shower benefits upon her, and her gratitude was far from equal to His goodness. As she reflected upon this she felt within herself the stirrings of the repentance which was to spur her into heroic resolutions.

"But really, it was so much more painful, and insupportable, for me to receive such favours upon the very nick of my having fallen into so great offences, than it would have been to endure punishments; that some one of those said favours so received, seems clearly to have defeated, and confounded, and wearied me more than many infirmities and other afflictions put together. For, as for these latter, I found, that, I deserved them well; and I thought, made some satisfaction for my sins; though all were but little for my many offences. But now, to see myself receiving afresh so high favours, whilst I made so ill retribution for those received before is, in my account, a kind of terrible torment; and I

think it will be esteemed so by all such as have any knowledge or love of God ; and we may easily find this to be true, even by the natural condition of persons, who are vertuously inclined."

She had yet another subject for reflection and another motive for repentance. Although she had given up prayer partly from false humility, and partly from bodily infirmities, she recommended it to those around her, and particularly to her father, for whom her love was tender and her reverence strong. But whilst he followed out the advice given him by his beloved daughter, she herself did not practise what she preached. Filled with shame she excused herself from prayer, pleading reasons which her conscience condemned freely.

Meanwhile Alonso de Cepeda was attacked by mortal sickness, which lasted but a few days. Teresa went to him, as the rule of her convent permitted, and exerted herself to the utmost as she tells us, to repay all the devoted care she had received from him during preceding years. "Being ill enough myself, I yet strained very hard to do him service ; and besides, I well considered, that by the only loss of him, all my comfort and delight was to be lost ; for it was all shut up only in him. I animated myself also, not to shew him that I was in any pain. He remained calm until he died."

His holy end, fitly crowning a life which she considered almost perfect, was a fresh lesson to her. Was its effect so strong as to detach her from a world deserted by the being she loved best on earth ? At all events she followed the counsels of her father's

confessor, the first director upon whom she felt she could really place reliance in periods of difficulty—she at once returned to prayer, and never again neglected it.

To those who are too apt to believe in a ready-made sanctity it is as well to point out that her conversion (for such indeed it was, in the original meaning of the word) was still to be completed very gradually, step by step.

For many years, if we may believe her, she experienced great difficulty in practising self-recollection as perfectly as she desired. Her thoughts were “more busied about desiring that the hour resolved to be spent in prayer might come quickly to an end, still listening when the clock would strike, than upon better things.” She needed the help of books or better still (was this indeed such an imperfection as she thought it?) the sight of fields, of water and flowers, which were to her as another book “wherein she read the goodness and greatness of God.”

In this way, Ribera tells us, she passed nearly twenty years, stumbling and rising, not properly able to appreciate the divine consolations because she did not prepare herself to receive them, and yet not able to enjoy those of an earthly nature because the recollection of what she owed to God and the many sins committed against Him, embittered everything she did.

Deeply imbued with the belief that her want of love had made her a great sinner, she applied to those Saints who had most deeply offended against

God, St Mary Magdalene and St Augustine. These two she associated with two events which she always took joy in regarding as the most decisive favours she had ever received from heaven. The first was as follows.

“ But now my Soul was already grown to be very weary ; and yet, the ill habits which I had gotten, would not permit her, though she desired it, to take any repose. God, however, who had heard my sighs let a ray of pity fall on me. It happened to me one day, upon my going into the Oratory, that I saw a Picture which had been brought in thither to be kept ; for they had borrowed it to serve for a certain Festivity, which was to be celebrated in the House, about that time. The Picture was of Christ our Lord very full of wounds ; and it was so devoutly made, that, when I looked upon it, it moved me much ; for it represented exceeding well, what he endured for us. And the sence of the little gratitude to our Lord, which I had expressed, for those wounds of his, was such, that, me-thought, my very heart did even split. And I cast myself down, near the Picture, with a great shower of tears, beseeching our Lord humbly, and earnestly, that he would strengthen me so farre, once for all ; as that, at length, I might offend him no more. I felt St Mary Magdalene come to my assistance, . . . I recommended myself to that glorious lover of Christ, that she might help me to obtain pardon of my sins. . . . I was grown into very great distrust of myself ; and placed all my confidence in God. To my thinking, I told him then, that I would never

rise from thence, till he granted me an answer to my earnest prayer; I am sure that he lent the humble Suite, which I had made; and I am fully of opinion that he granted it, for from that day I have gone improving much ever since in my spiritual life."

Soon after this she read for the first time the Confessions of St Augustine: when she reached the page where the seal is put upon his conversion by the voice from heaven which he heard in the garden, she was "overcome with tender remorse" and her tears flowed abundantly: she was then, we imagine, not less than forty years of age.

This then was the order of the leading facts which marked the various stages of her religious life in the Convent of the Encarnacion. But, long before this, we know that she had been initiated into the stirrings of the mystical life; into its torments, its ecstasies and its wonders; into its often bewildering demands, which must be understood before they can be obeyed. It is time we tried to penetrate into these solemn mysteries with the aid of her own explanations, which are as exact as they are sublime. There indeed lay the crowning point of her existence—there was the well-spring which, in the silence of the cloister, during a period of twenty years, was to nourish the high virtues, the high deeds, in a word, the heroism, of her life.

CHAPTER III

SUPERNATURAL GIFTS

I MUST now speak of her mystical life. The terms "mysticism," "the mystical life," taken in their broadest sense, mean the soul wholly possessed by the love of God.¹ Now love seeks after union, and, even if it never reaches this point, it none the less goes on aspiring after it; and this aspiring impulse is of its very essence. But here are two beings immeasurably unequal in every way, and this inequality characterises the various orders of the aspiration which tends to bring them closer to each other. There are cases in which the human soul has the power of accomplishing something in this direction of itself, with no more aid than the ordinary means at the disposal of all Christians in a state of grace; and this may perhaps be designated as mysticism in its truest sense. On the other hand, there are cases where the movement towards union is unattainable by these means, and demands a special intervention and a peculiar power given by divine interposition; and this, too, is undoubtedly mysticism; but St Teresa herself perceived a still higher form of mysticism in what she calls (in a meaning which shall be presently explained) supernatural prayer.

¹ See the *Psychology of the Saints*, chap. i.

“Supernatural” she uses here, not in its ordinary sense of the element without which Christian life could not exist, but of an exceptional state not attained to by every mystic. The form of mysticism we are now considering was that which, according to her own account, permeated the whole of her rarely favoured life.

We are now encountered by a superabundance and a complexity of phenomena which make the task an exceedingly difficult one. In order to throw all possible light upon the various sides of this great soul of hers, we shall be obliged to analyse in parts that which was really one harmonious whole. We will try therefore in our preliminary chapter to follow her own experiences of these various mystical states which were perfected by specially supernatural gifts. We will afterwards follow her through the psychological analysis of this mysticism which she gives us, and finally examine into the system of doctrine by which she explains its operation, supports it, supervises it, actually (so far as is humanly possible) directs, up to a certain point, its operations in herself and in others.

Will not this method prove to be too artificial? Is there not the danger that the fact of separation it involves will be constantly lost sight of in the course of the narrative? But even while I am wavering, a maxim of the Saint's comes to mind which dispels all my doubts, for I read in her life: “To receive favours from God is a first grace, to understand the nature of the gift received is a second; and there is a third whereby we are enabled

to explain and make it clear to our intelligence." Now what better method can we propose than to follow her in her own efforts to analyse the workings of the three gifts which she possessed in such abundance; and is it not our duty to study each separately when she herself so definitely distinguishes between them?

Prayer is the duty of every Christian. But if it is to become other than a half self-interested request, and one which is more or less tempered with humility, it must undergo that transformation which she called mental prayer. How many times this expression recurs in her writings may be known by those who simply open any of them at random. But many have frequently questioned what is the exact meaning of this mystical language, and what is the difference between the mental and ordinary prayer. Upon this point she gives us the clearest answer that could possibly have been made (*Life*, chap. viii.).

"For Mental Prayer is nothing else in my opinion than a Treaty of friendship with God, and a frequent and private commerce with him by whom we are assured we are beloved."

We can easily see the difference. St Teresa had certainly never abandoned prayer in its ordinary application, *i.e.* vocal prayer, which usually consists in the repetition of some accepted form. But, as we have seen, she had almost entirely given up this private communion, and even when she returned to it she always found it a difficult matter.

If we take the opinion of those who are privileged to study such instances at first hand, either from their own experience, or from souls under their guidance; readiness and ease in prayerful contemplation are not always guarantees of sanctity. The example of the maiden of Avila, as of some others, provides a convincing argument for the truth of the suggestion that this often occurs in religious development, as well as in the history of art. Precocious natures experience even from their earliest years a delight, almost amounting to ecstasy, in listening to an air of music, or at seeing a picture; just as others have been known, almost from infancy, to marshal long columns of figures and work out sums from them by mental arithmetic. We are too ready to see in such powers the signs of superior genius, and time after time we are deceived. This precocity does not always preclude genius, but still less is it a guarantee of genius. There is no department of art indeed which does not demand a host of gifts to acquire. Perfection cannot indeed be attained in any art without persevering application and systematic practice, and it is also quite probable that if pleasure is experienced too early, and with too great an intensity, it tends to make the mind idle and apt to rest content with its first keenly felt enjoyment, and with the facile talent which was sufficient to procure it; it has neither the patience nor the strength to climb to higher flights. But the man who has advanced by the harder path of effort, and who has persevered in it, ends by finding himself in the front rank; his very efforts have created

energies, the consciousness of which give him the courage essential to the conception, and yet more to the execution of still grander schemes. It is probably often the same in the mystical life. In any case it was so with St Teresa, who is regarded, not unreasonably, as the greatest of all mystics (*mater spiritualium*); for she expressly tells us in chapter xvii. of the *Way of Perfection*: "I was above fourteen years . . . and could never use even Meditation, unless joyned with reading." She was obliged then, she goes on to explain, to take great pains to learn to "kill little by little that natural desire to see and understand." The very richness of her intellect and fertility of her imagination piled up before her all the obstacles which had to be conquered at all costs by her fixed desire of serving God. "This holy exercise of prayer," she says again, in chapter xi. of her *Life*, "has its price, and I assure you, as a person, who has spent many years so, that, when sometimes I came to draw, and get but some one single drop of water, out of this blessed Well, I thought, that God did me a great Favour. I know well, that these troubles are very great; and I conceive, that there is more need of courage, for supporting them, than for many other things of this world; but yet I have seen clearly that God leaves them not, without great reward, even in this life. For . . . I esteem all those sad afflictions which I suffered so long in order to continue the use of prayer, to have been well rewarded by one single hour wherein Our Lord gave me to taste of His delectable sweetness."

Several considerations sustained her through this arduous struggle. In the first place, she felt herself to be in no way in arrears (so to speak) with God, because she dared to offer Him her service freely, like a friend or a child who is glad to give labour and pains, and not like a hireling who immediately demands payment for his work: in such moments she was no longer able to exclaim: "To receive everything and to give nothing in return is a martyrdom under which I die daily." Now the reward of the mystic is a satisfaction of the imagination, of those exquisite feelings of devotion which revel in their own emotions. She was just as eager after perfection, although such feelings were often delayed, or withheld from her: she felt indeed that to work on with bold and disinterested courage was itself a part of perfection, and she would have been heartily ashamed to adopt a cowardly pretext for not maintaining that courage through all her dealings with the things of the spirit.

This quality of detachment, in its turn, endowed her with a quality which she valued in a high degree, freedom of mind; that is to say, a feeling of indifference to all that stood in the way of self-surrender. Enthusiasm of this kind is self-confident. St Teresa's confidence, not in herself, we need hardly say, but in God, was boundless and unclouded. Her faith from the first was so great that, even when under suspicion of heresy and apprehending a threat of the Inquisition, she was not even aroused to indignation, much less to fear. "This," she says, "I took for a rest, and it made me laugh; for I

never was afraid of such an account, as knowing very well, that, in matters of *Faith*, or for the observation and defence of the least *Ceremony* of the *church*, of whatever truth of *Holy Scripture*, I was ready to suffer a thousand deaths.”¹

We can understand that it cost such faith very little effort to give all the credit to God. To use a comparison which she loved, she was like a soldier who will not take any initiative because he places no reliance in his own judgment and recognises moreover what is due to discipline and obedience to orders, but waits eagerly for the commands of his officer, who can never ask him to do enough. She would have given much to be free from her confessors, who, with the best of intentions, led their penitents “at a snail’s pace.” How many times does she bemoan that it was twenty years before she found one who understood her. “What!” she exclaimed, “did St Peter lose anything by the bargain when he threw himself into the sea, though yet he were afraid?” She loved to dwell on this, as she was fond of exclaiming with St Paul, “I can do all things through Christ,” or with St Augustine (for instinctively she turned to the great authorities), “Grant the Power to do whatsoever Thou commandest, and then command whatsoever Thou pleasest.”

Until now she had remained in the “First Degree of Prayer,” which she had found difficult to reach, and often as difficult to maintain. She compares herself to one who desires to water his garden

¹ *Foundations*, chapter ii.

and has to draw the water with his own hands. Moreover, the water of grace is rare, and lies underground in deep strata, and has to be drawn up by the sweat of the soul's brow. But at this juncture God comes to all souls, as the engineer helps the gardener. To the latter is given a machine, a *noria*, which greatly reduces the labour, although it is still hard work, and conducts the water to the level of the ground, after which it is an easy matter to convey it to all the flowers in the garden. And God deals just so with the soul in the Second Degree of the Mystic Life. This fresh contact of the soul with the water of grace is attained with less effort: it is called the Prayer of Quiet. She describes its blessings very clearly from her own experience. "Directly I began to experience this supernatural Prayer I felt peace come into my soul." In another place she states: "It is to my thinking in this Prayer of Quiet that our Lord begins to make known that He has heard our request and begins already to give us His Kingdom here. This is a thing Supernatural (Prayer of Quiet), and which he cannot acquire, no matter what diligence he use." (Chap. xxxi., *Way of Perfection*.)

Would not this condition of soul tend to make it void, and arrest its spiritual development? Teresa certainly never experienced anything of the sort. It was sin which "caused emptiness" of soul. God comes and fills the void: He fills it with a consciousness of being brought nearer to the only living source of all goodness. This sense of nearness may suppress effort, but it does not suppress the will.

True, with respect to God, the will restricts itself to the act of giving consent, but still keeps complete mistress of its own faculties, and holds sufficient control over the understanding and memory to induce them gradually to enter into union. We know what this condition of union is from the Saint's own description of it, either in the form of advice or by a clear and straightforward statement of her own marvellous experience. There is no doubt she ignored rational explanations and believed that in such cases the reason is but a "brawler," for indeed to wish to argue upon them were like trying to extinguish the divine spark by throwing rough blocks of wood on it. In what estimation then does the Mystic hold her own fine and quick intellect?¹ "The understanding," she says, "guides itself then to possess such an excessive kind of charity, by being so near to the Light itself, that even I (as poor, and miserable, as I am) seem to be another kind of Creature. And it is most certainly true, that it hath hapned to me, being in this Quiet, and without understanding, in effect, anything of the Prayers, which are recited in Latin, and especially of *Psalter*, that not only I understand the Verse in *Spanish*, but I go further and find with delight I understand even the hidden meaning."

As a rule she confined herself to asking God to continue this favour to herself. She prayed for the Church, for those who had recommended themselves to her, for the souls in purgatory, and "her prayers

¹ *Life*, xv.

were with no sound of words but with burning desire to be answered." She acknowledged her own nothingness in all her prayers, and found her happiness in the wholesale destruction of everything in herself that was still human and earthly. She was rewarded by a calm courage ready for every emergency, and by an unshaken belief in her salvation. Indeed love had taken the place of fear more firmly than ever, for she said: "For, if the soul in herself be apt to be enamoured, and grateful,¹ the memory of that great Favour which God did her, is of more power to make her return to his Divine Majesty, than all the torments of Hell. At least (as wicked as I am) it hapned after this manner to me." And so great was her gratitude that she burst forth into praise. "Lord," she exclaims in the story of her life, "how glorious has been the greatness of the forgiveness Thou hast deigned to shower on me. All who are witness to it are amazed, and I am often prostrate with gratitude to think of it. And thus my song of praise shall the better ascend to Thee."

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But the waters of grace mount still higher, and become a gushing spring and a running river watering all it passes by: it is no longer hard to draw; "the only difficulty lies in the distribution of it." The soul intoxicated by the great draughts of spiritual water that God showers upon it feels the union become closer and closer; almost dead to

¹ Two expressions peculiarly applicable to herself.

earthly pleasures, the whole being aspires but to rest in an ecstasy of delight in its God.

In the description she gives us immediately she comes out of one of those moments of the third state of union, the Saint throws a light on these fresh phenomena which would delight her as would some fresh token of grace. Till now her intellectual faculties had still been occupied with external and passing events. Did they still continue to work? Yes, but only to radiate, as it were, all about her, the happiness which floods her soul. "Me-thinks she is now like her in the *Gospel* who, when she had found the lost piece of money, had a mind, to call in all together her Neighbours, and invite them to rejoice with her." With David she breaks forth into songs and makes psalms. It is not the working of her own mind, but a welling up of her soul distraught with love. It is with life, but a life which renounces self and allows itself to be transformed and enriched with fresh gifts and changed it knows not how. Her soul becomes visibly united in God.

This sublime union yet carries with it certain stages in her by which she gradually approached to perfect union. At one time she finds she is leading both a contemplative and an active life at once. She can occupy her mind with charitable affairs, with reading, and with the matters concerning her work, but she is conscious all the while that her spirit is elsewhere. At another time she finds her intellect and her will power are riveted, whilst her imagination and her memory are roving. But it

was in vain that she grieved over this struggle; union swept it away: her body participated in the pleasure which filled her soul, and all her faculties were increasingly strengthened thereby.

There is yet another and final state of union in this increasing growth of supernatural gifts: the contemplative soul must absolutely renounce everything earthly. The spiritual influence is no longer a trickling stream but a rushing water gushing from all quarters, like a downpour of rain, fertilising and benefiting every corner of the garden.

To what part of the subject should we give our chief attention? To the divine and supernatural elements in the phenomenon, or to the use it makes of so much of natural human life as it retains? I may be mistaken, but it seems to me that even from the religious point of view, and for the sake of the honour of the true mystical life, there are adequate grounds for insisting principally upon the second of these two groups of phenomena; for the constant disregard of it is what nowadays is best calculated to defame the fair names of the Saints. All the phenomena are jumbled together indiscriminately into a kind of general annihilation of consciousness; with the comment that if God's influence is to suppress every natural faculty what is the nature of this purely destructive attribute? What is the good of it, and what becomes of the divine element in its character?

Now, the great Carmelite tells us distinctly she quickly perceived during these states that her senses became deadened, she could neither form nor utter a

word, but this superficial external weakness did not affect the depths of her inmost soul. Very far from that, the life that left the surface flew inwards, and there became intensified without need of further support than its consciousness of the presence of God. "All the strength of her Body is absolutely lost, for the greater increase of that of her Soul, that so she may the better enjoy her glory."¹ But we spoke just now of "weakness"; the word is not correct even as regards the body, where, at all events, the term should be properly understood. If the body has no further actual relations with its external world, it retains, or rather it regains, an unwonted internal vigour.

"This Prayer puts the person to no manner of inconvenience in any kind, how long soever it may last; at least it never put me to any; nor am I able to remember (when our Lord did me this Favour) how sick or weak soever I were, that I ever found my self the worse; but rather, with much improvement in my health."

Is this increase of internal energy solely the effect of the growth of the spiritual strength which accompanies it? Or has it some effect on the peculiar character which invests these spiritual powers? In any case let us listen to the Saint once more.

"The Soul remains so courageous thereby, that if in this point of time it were cut into a thousand pieces for God's sake, it would be a great consolation to her. Here come in her promises, her heroical resolutions; the lively efficacy of her desires. . . ."

¹ *Life*, xviii.

She is then far from wishing to narrow or concentrate herself in unhealthy raptures and unscrupulous imaginations, thus placing herself indiscriminately at the mercy of any kind of impression that might arise. Even when God began to lavish favours upon her, she argued with Him, as it were, and protected the interests of His Glory, pleading with Him in her humility not to expose it to danger in her person. "Often," she says, "such prayer escaped me as: O Lord, consider well what Thou dost; forget not so soon my very grievous sins; and though Thou hast forgotten them so far as to vouchsafe to forgive them, yet remember them also (I humbly beseech Thee) so far as to make Thee put some limits to those Favours Thou bestowest. Power not, O my Creatour, so pretious a Liquor into so broken a Vessel, . . . lodge not such a treasure as this where the affection to all the consolations of this life, is not yet so totally lost as it ought to be." And this is not a mere empty aspiration.¹ "Understanding clearly enough that the Fruit is none of her own [the soul] begins to give part of it to others, without feeling any want of it herself. She now begins also to give signes and marks of such a Soul as in a Store-House of the Treasures of Heaven; and to carry great desires of making others partake them; and to beseech God that she may not be alone in possessing them. She begins now to profit her Neighbours without almost understanding it herself. . . ."

When is it that she speaks thus? Not only in

¹ *Life*, xviii. and xix.

these lyrical rhapsodies, which some of her critics scornfully call hysterical crises, but in those letters of hers which are so full of good sense, written to help her brother in the mystical life, and giving explanations which might be summed up in the following formula: earthly feelings pass away, but spiritual graces remain.

“When God becomes Master in the Soule, he goes on bestowing on her a dominion over all created things. And, though that Presence and gust pass away (the thing you complain of) as if there had bin nothing, as to the sensual perception thereof, to which God is pleased to give some part of the Soul’s joy, yet doth not the Soul quite lose it, nor ceaseth to continue very rich in favours, as is seen afterward in tract of time by the effects.”

But we have not, however, done with these visible and more or less transitory effects of this supernatural action.

Until now all passed internally in the same order almost invariably—a succession of states each having its beginning, middle, and end—these are the very expressions of the authority with whom we have now to deal. We have now followed her to those manifestations which were partly of an “external” nature. Ought we to say that being more physical and corporeal they are therefore essentially less noble and their value more doubtful? She did not interpret it so, for she expressly says that such phenomena are of “a higher order,” and she goes on to prove it in those very honest descriptions that

she gives us immediately after, or on the day following, one of these sublime unions. It is quite certain that throughout this portion of her life, exclusively devoted though it was to contemplation, no trace of diminution was ever observable, or falling away of spirituality. In vain did her ecstasies of soul stir up her body and disturb its faculties. We see her steadfastly advancing towards a purer and purer love and towards the creation, the employment and the ever increasingly efficacious application of what she so dearly loves to call "apostolic powers."

In her *Life*, written about 1565, she groups together what she calls rapt, elevation or flights of spirit, transport or ecstasy: terms, she says, all expressing the same thing.

Now, in the union which precedes all these conditions "there is some remedy (we being then on our own earth [*i.e.* ground]); and so (though it be not without suffering a kind of pain, and using some force) there may always, in effect, be some resistance made. But here (in the state of Rapt) for the most part there is no remedy at all, nor any help; but, many times without our thinking of it, or being any way able to prevent it, there grows to be such a speedy, and strong kind of impetuositie, that you see and find this cloud to raise itself instantly up; or rather, that this strong Eagle takes you and carries you quite away, between her wings."

The reader is here reminded of those fine lines of the poet:—

Ainsi quand tu fonds sur mon âme,
Enthousiasme, aigle vainqueur. . . .

But, however "inspired" the poet in the accepted meaning of the word, no one among us sees anything in these lines beyond a series of beautiful metaphors. If we now say that the mystic actually experienced throughout her whole body the effects of this exterior power which transported her, shall we not again be thrown back on the widely varying symptoms of nerve disease? But between her mental condition and the coma or the feverish and disruptive activity of disease, there is an incalculable difference. [In reality the supernatural condition that we are now studying is as superior to the one as to the other of these two states, although it resembles both superficially.] "You understand," she tells us, "and find yourself to be carried away, and know not whither. For, howsoever the thing happens to be with delight, yet so great is the weakness of our natural condition, that it puts us into some fear in the beginning." . . . "It will be necessary, in this case," she adds, "for the soul to be much more courageous, and resolute, than for all those occasions, which were precedent. For here she must be content to hazard all, come on it what will, and to leave herself wholly in the hands of God, and to goe whithersoever she shall be carried with a good will." In vain did she struggle against this impulse from a kind of shame rising out of her humbleness; clutching at her own limbs, even throwing herself on the ground to try and hide the phenomena from the eyes of others.

"It was altogether impossible for me to hinder it; for, my Soul would be carried absolutely away

and ordinarily even my head, as it were, after it; . . . and sometimes my whole Body, so as to be raised up from the ground."

The description of its physical effects, it is true, does not stop short there. She recalls how her body often became so light that it lost its sense of gravity. It remained as if dead in an absolutely powerless condition of passivity, preserving "the same attitude in which it had been overtaken." Impossible to deny, says one, that this was catalepsy! Really! but even in medicine a symptom is only of value in its relative place in a series of facts which go to make up the diagnosis of the whole case; it is the order in which they follow, the end to which they converge and come to a head which gives them their true signification. Now is the case before us one of common somnambulistic catalepsy?

Let us even go so far as to admit that speaking in terms of natural science and physiology, Teresa was really in a state of the hypnotic subject who has just received some irresistible suggestion. We know that a suggestion which works upon a suitable, prepared subject, both suspends the senses, creating almost a new set, and transforms the imagination; it carries away the will which make no resistance and finally compels actions which the subject executes entirely through suggestions given to him from without. Well! where do we see in our mystic that first suggestion upon which the whole process depends? Listen to her own account: "Suddenly the soul feels an overwhelming desire for God." And what follows? What are the ensuing effects?

She who experienced them analyses them with astonishing shrewdness; she feels the supreme power of God, and fears it, but at the same time loves and adores it. She becomes more and more estranged from earthly things of this life, but she recognises that she is still too far away from Heavenly things; and in distress at finding herself shut out from a blessing which includes all other blessings, "she feels that both the desire after God doth increase, and so also doth the extremity of that Solitude, wherein the Soul finds herself. . . . She remains, as if she were crucified, between Heaven and Earth . . . and all the anxiety of her desire at this time is, that she may die." It was verily a martyrdom, but one which, as the martyr aptly says, is attended with faith, love and hope; the body, too, soon feels a regenerating effect: "The person, who was sick, doth thus recover health many times; and she, who was full of weakness and pain, recovers strength." "When once the soul is come to this pass, they are not bare desires which she hath to the service of God; for then His Divine Majesty gives her strength also to put them in execution." "Here are her feathers impeded ["grafted"] to make a strong flight; and here, are the sick ones fallen off; here is the Banner of Christ our Lord totally raised up and displayed, and it seems as if the Captain of this Fort, either gets up himself, or else is instantly carried up to the highest Tower there, to plant the said standard, for the glory of God. She looks now upon them who are below, as one, who is already in safety; for now she is so far from

fearing dangers, that she rather wishes them; as a person, to whom, in some sort, a security is given, for obtaining victory. . . . So here she that was the Gardiner, become the Governor of a Castle; nor will she do anything at all, but according to the will of the Lord thereof. . . . She will not from that time forward possess any kind of thing, as having propriety therein; but covets, that all things may be entirely done in conformity to the will of our Lord, and for his glory."

About ten years after having penned these lines, she once more took up her analysis of these crises and confirms the accuracy of the description given above. The only difference that she perceived after repeated experience and attention, was this.¹

"If the ecstasy is a state in which the soul is more strongly shaken and understands its benefits more clearly than when in the state of union, the rapture, properly speaking, is greater than the ecstasy: it is readier and springs more directly from the simple consciousness that God gives to the inmost soul, and virtues derived from it are greater than from the state of ecstasy. In short a rapture borders more on a flight of spirit and transport—states wherein the soul feels itself freer and more willing to yield itself up to God."

More and more do we come to the conclusion that these physical phenomena were but an inevitable episode in our heroine's development between her advancing state of union on the one side and the enjoyment of those spiritual gifts which came to her

¹ See *Relation to Father Rodrigo Alvarez, Letters*, iii. 434.

to transform her whole being. The body in these cases is no longer an agent, it is passive, and originates nothing; and if the feeling of renewed strength in a measure contributes to the virile courage which is prepared to make use of it, this very accession of vigour is derived solely from spiritual influences, and the body thus gives back to the soul, what it received from it.

This account of 1575 is not however the last word of the great contemplative Saint who studied and knew herself and could relate her own experiences so well. In 1578 she wrote *The Interior Castle*. The allegories are new, and the explanatory analogues demand comparisons of another type; but the basis remains the same¹ and the characteristics of her mystical life are defined on the same lines, ever maintained and ever aspiring in what Plato would have called her internal dialectic. We shall return presently to this sublime work to examine into her advice to contemplatives which is given there with greater authority and clearness than elsewhere. Regarded strictly from the point of view we have now adopted, it contains one addition to her former intimate revelations—a more complete description of the “seventh mansion,” the last to which the soul of the Saint attained.

¹ St Teresa said further in her introduction:—“I am confident I shall be able to say little more than what I have said in other things, which I have been commanded to write, nay I fear lest they prove almost all the same.” However, in chapter ii. she allows herself to say: “Understanding certain things, especially of the more difficult nature, better now, as it seems to me, I can deal with them in a less unfinished way.”

Until then spiritual marriage was being prepared ; the state of waiting caused the privileged soul a veritable martyrdom, which has nothing actually in common with natural physical illness nor with the torments of the devil : it even leaves the will invigorated and the intellect clearer, for it is caused by nothing but longing, rooted in a firmer conviction than ever of the value of these long expected benefits. But union is not yet consummated, although the time is not far distant. Then, no more troubles or internal throes, even the very longing to suffer ceases to agitate the soul. The impetuous raptures, ecstasies, flights of spirit, become rarer. "Either because she hath found her repose,¹ or hath seen so much in this Mansion that she admires nothing, or finds not now such solitude since she enjoys so good company ; . . . when our Lord hath begun to show the soul what is in this Mansion, and brought her into it, this great infirmity, which was very troublesome to her, and would not be gone formerly, leaves her straight."

All therefore becomes internal, and from the depths of the tried soul a force wells up that is ever readier and more prompt for active service. ["Hitherto is Prayer directed, my daughters ; hereto in God's intention conduceth this Spiritual Marriage to the bringing forth incessant works to his glory. . . . Let us desire and employ ourselves in Prayer, not for delight and enjoying, but for the obtaining those Apostolic powers wherewith to serve our Spouse."]

And this was the state reached by the supposed subject of nerve-diseases. In 1581 she sent a copy

¹ See the *Interior Castle*, "Seventh Mansions," chap. iii. and iv.

of her "Seventh Mansions" to Father Rodrigo Alvarez through Mother Maria de San José and she writes: "Tell him that she whom he once knew has reached the last mansion, and is enjoying the peace there spoken about, and that she dwells in a state of rest." But, as we shall soon see, this state of rest was not one of torpor; it was the holding in reserve of faculties ready to spring forth to heroic apostleship.

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We must however at this juncture, retrace our steps, for we must examine with her assistance Teresa's other gifts, which are certainly connected with the former but distinguishable from them. They are distinguishable from them because the personal life of the servant of God does not, it seems, play such an active part therein; because their supernatural character is more pronounced and borders more and more on the miraculous. They are distinguishable, again, because they are, in the case at present under our consideration, a reward for the extraordinary sanctity of her who was honoured with them. She herself expressly did not wish to confound these gifts with holiness itself. She accepts them reverently and gratefully, but not without some fear; they urge her on, she feels, to higher virtues, and present those virtues as a formidable duty; but, they are not themselves those virtues, and whilst there is no possible doubt as to the value of humility and of self-sacrifice, or of prayer and of love of God, there is always a feeling of doubt as to how far these extraordinary phenomena tend to promote the salvation of the recipient.

What these phenomena are, we can guess at the outset; visions, apparitions, revelations and certain gifts which it is permissible to call secondary (compared to the rest) such as the discernment of spirits, second sight or prophecy.

[Did these events then fall, as it were, like thunderbolts into her life unexpectedly? No. "When once our Lord brings a soul so near himself," she says, "he goes by little and little communicating very great secrets to her. Here are the true Revelations, in this Extasie and other great Favours, and Visions.]"

But let us first see what these visions were not. "She never saw them with her bodily eyes" so she often declared, and particularly in her Relation of 1575 to Father Rodrigo Alvarez. Ten years later in the chapter "Sixth Mansions" of the *Interior Castle* she reiterated this assertion. "Were they seen by the bodily eyes? I do not know, because the person I refer to and whose inner life I knew so intimately never had any vision of that kind." It is therefore out of the question to call this hallucination: the greater portion of her visions were, as she tells us repeatedly, intellectual visions. In order to understand the nature of these visions we cannot do better than listen to her own statements. "For, if I say, that I neither saw Our Lord, with the eyes of the Body, nor of the Mind (because it was no Imaginary Visions) how come I to understand, and how can I undertake and affirme, more clearly, and certainly, that He is standing by me, than if I had seen Him? For it seems indeed to me, as if a person were in the dark, who sees not another that stands by him; or as if the

same person were blind. This suits not exactly ; some resemblance it carry's ; though not much. For such a one knows it by the Senses ; because he hears the other speak, or stir, or toucheth him. But here there is nothing of all this ; nor is there perceived any darkness at all ; but the thing represented to the Soul by a certain notice, which is clearer than the Sun. I say not that any Sun, or brightness is seen but only a certain light, which (without seeing any light) illuminates and informes the Understanding, to the end that the Soul may enjoy so high a good. Now this brings great benefits with it." ¹

" Imaginary visions " were considered by the Saint to be of a lower order, although on several occasions she permits herself to say that in certain respects they seemed to be more profitable, as being " more conformable to nature." To what then shall we compare them ? To those clearly defined and highly coloured sketches wherein a great artist conceives his portrait before depicting it in marble or on canvas ? In any case this would not be a suitable comparison ; for whilst, still accepting the word " imaginary " in its usual meaning, the Saint goes on to assert that in her judgment, imagination alone cannot call up these images : it submits to them but does not create them. She is at all events convinced of the fact so far as her own experience was concerned ;

¹ In some other descriptions, however, the Saint represents herself as receiving certain more precise details ; the vision, for instance, is on her right or left ; but the immateriality of the mysterious sign which declares its presence remains. The vision comes through the intellect, not the imagination.

so far did the visions, by which her imagination had been thrilled, surpass the natural limits of that faculty. The ordinary imagination can, she knew, by a supreme effort draw a picture of Our Lord but the figure it conceives is lifeless and dead as in a picture. What a difference there is here !

“ It falls out that some persons (and I know it to be true ; for, not three or four, but many have conferred with me about it) are of so lively an Imagination, or so vigorous an Understanding, or, what it is, I know not, that they so strongly fix their Imagination, that, whatever they think on, they say, they see it clearly, as it seemeth to them. But, had they seen a true Vision, they would, without having any doubt thereof, plainly perceive the mistake ; for, they go framing with their imagination to themselves that which they see, without finding afterward any effect thereof, but are much colder, than if they had seen a devout Picture. It is very evident, that one is not to heed it, and so it is forgotten much sooner than a Dream. In that we are speaking of, it is not so ; but, the Soul being very far from imagining that she is to see anything, nor having the least thought thereof, presently at once the whole Object is represented to her together, and with a great fright and disorder turns all the powers, and senses, upside down, to put them soon afterward into that blessed peace. And, as, when St Paul was thrown to the earth, that tempest and noise from heaven followed, so it is in this Interior World ; a great motion precedes, and in an instant everything is calme, and the Soul so fully instructed in very high truths, that

she heeds no other Master; for the true Wisdom, without any pains of hers, hath dispelled her ignorance, and the soul continues for a good space in great certainty, that this favour is from God. And let them tell her the contrary neversomuch, they cannot make her thus fear any illusion.”¹

These visions are far removed from those produced by fever or fear, or some derangement of the nerve centres whose only salient feature is their incoherence. They have a meaning, and an object, and she who was the recipient of them is herself introduced and has her part in the drama which is going on. Herein she exceeds so immeasurably the greater number of mystics, and stands out in the midst of them with such an original character. She argues, as we have already seen in several instances, with Him who appears to her. When Christ said to her, “Fear not, Daughter, that anyone can deprive Thee of Me,” she is reassured and enjoys her bliss in confidence. But see how the scene changes or expands. The Saviour (as at other times) “represented Himself to me by an Imaginary Vision, very interior, and gave me His Right Hand, saying, Behold this Naile, which is a Token, that from this day thou shalt become my Spouse . . . my Honour is thine, and thine mine. This Favour wrought such an effect in me, that I could not bear it, but was as one distracted, and intreated our Lord either to dilate my Meanness, or not do me so extraordinary a Favour.”

In this vision as in many others, she heard spoken words . . . heard them as clearly as she saw the

¹ *The Interior Castle*, “Sixth Mansions,” chap. ix.

forms and faces. The words of this divine language, "however they be not heard with corporal ears, yet are they understood yet more expressly and clearly, than if they were so heard. And to forbear to understand them (how much resistance soever there may be) is a vanity, and an impossible thing. . . . It obligeth the understanding to be so entire and attentive, for the comprehending of that which God will have us understand, that our willingness or unwillingness avails nothing."

That a person gifted with a powerful imagination and given to prayer should hear the voice of his conscience as though it came from without, may be explained, someone might say, by purely natural causes. Socrates certainly interpreted his familiar dæmon in this way. There is as it were an involuntary reverberation of the inner thought which is reflected upon the image ; what the thought has discovered in its long meditations, the image translates into its own language by a single stroke. Granted, this explanation may be a true one, and correct in even a large number of instances. But was it so when the mystic received warnings which surprised her, announcements or promises of a nature she did not understand ? Moreover, was it the same when the words that she heard foretold future events and when subsequently these anticipated visions really came to pass ? When she saw, for example, from the isolation of her remote convent of Medina del Campo, the forty Jesuits massacred upon the vessel which was taking them to Brazil, the event and the authenticated accounts of it which

were received later, confirmed exactly in every detail the vision which she had confided to Father Alvarez.¹ And she had a great number of similar revelations. What did Pedro de Alcantara think of them, when, about 1560, he came to examine very carefully into the condition of her soul? "Nothing was revealed to her," he says, "which was not found compatible with the truth or which was not fulfilled to the letter; which is a strong proof that these visions come from God."²

But some years after, she, who was ever sincere, was not afraid to say: "I have heard nothing in Prayer, though many years before it fell out, but I have seen it all fulfilled." She warned absent persons of dangers which threatened them, and exhorted them to take measures in time to avoid the misfortune which would overtake them. She reassured her friends and acquaintances upon the subsequent issue of dubious matters which from that distance off she saw would end fortunately, without the smallest circumstance of time or of place escaping her notice. She often knew of the death of nuns belonging to her convent before the news had reached her. And finally she predicted, a long time previously, the year of her own death, which happened in fact at the time she had specified.

Do not these comings to a head—if so we may speak—of the whole succession of kindred phenomena throw a vivid light upon all those phenomena

¹ See *Letters*, iii. pp. 371, 378.

² Father Alvarez and Gaspar de Salazar bore the same testimony, relying on facts more commonly known.

which preceded them? It is certain that we can hardly separate the beginning and middle from the end which crowns them. Now if the end is of a supernatural character, why suppose their middle and even their beginnings to be due to nothing but morbid or over-excited nature?

The feature that should raise the character of these strange facts in the eyes of all—believers or unbelievers—is the effect they had upon the Saint's moral life, the virtue which she saw in them—to say nothing of that she drew from them. The culminating point of these relations with the spiritual world was evidently the phenomenon of transverberation which she relates in chapter xxix. of her *Life*.

“It pleased our Lord that I have had sometimes this following vision. I saw an Angel very near me, towards my left side, in a Corporeal forme; though yet I am not wont to see anything of that kind but very rarely. For, though Angels be presented often to me, I see them but as in an Intellectual Vision. In this Vision our Lord was pleased that I should see the Angel in a form visible to my spiritual sight. He was not great, but rather little, very beautiful; his face so inflamed, that he appeared to be of those most Superiour Angels, who seem all flame and love. . . . I saw that he had a long Dart of gold in his hand; and at the end of the iron below, methought there was a little fire; and I conceived that he thrust it several times through my heart after such a manner, as that it passed my very Bowels; and when he drew it forth, methought it

pulled them out with it, and left me wholly inflamed with a great love of God.

“The pain of it was so great, that it forced me to utter such groanes, and the suavity which that extremity of pain caused me so excessive, that there was no desiring to be rid of it; nor is the Soul then contented with less than God himself. This is no Corporal but a Spiritual pain; though yet the Body do not fail to participate some, yea a great part thereof. It is such a delightful intercourse, which passes here between the Soul and God, as no words can express. . . . During the time when I was in this state, I went up and down like one transported, neither cared I, either to see or to speak, but only to be deliciously absorbed in my pain, which was a greater glory to me, than any can be found in the creatures.”

It is known how the sight of St Teresa's heart after death confirmed the existence of that wound by a long and deep cicatrice dividing it almost in half. But what then were the consequences of that “delicious absorption”? Did the wounded one die from exhaustion? No. It was in 1559, when she was forty-four years old, that she received this stroke. The following year, in 1560, she responded by a memorable vow which fitly ended and determined this crowning period of her life. What was that vow? what did she promise to undertake? To inflict some fresh severe discipline upon herself? Or build a chapel? Or organise a pilgrimage? Or to keep lamps ever burning before some altar? No, but in every thing to do always that which appeared

to her to be the most perfect and best pleasing to God. After this what further can we say? One thing only: she kept her word.

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But supernatural phenomena seem to a certain extent to have two sides to them; there is the divinely supernatural side; but no mystic has lived who has not experienced, from within and from without, the diabolically supernatural side.

That the Devil or the devils (*i.e.* those spirits which have allowed death to set a seal on their contagious love of evil) interfere in this world's affairs, St Teresa was most certainly convinced, without needing any proofs of the fact. It seemed quite natural to her that St Clare should appear to strengthen her: she believed that the part which had been taken in this life by the gentle virgin of Assisi she—who had loved the good St Francis so much,—had not been annihilated by death, and that she returned to give hope to lovers of poverty who were carrying on her work. But it seemed to her equally logical that those who had hated the light all their lives should still try to quench it: they could not do otherwise, she would have said, than continue their same corrupt propaganda, that is, the manifestation of malevolent energy which they themselves created for themselves and which decided their destiny for ever. Should anyone have asked her why these hostile interventions hardly ever manifest themselves so notoriously as in convents or upon people who have submitted themselves to all the raptures, but at the same time to all the

penances, not to say the actual maladies of the mystical life; she would not have been at all puzzled for a reply; she would have said that worldly people serve the interests of these corrupt spirits but too well, and that the latter need only to let them do what they like: it is not in the least surprising therefore that they should be infuriated against those who devote themselves to bringing about the Kingdom of God on this earth. . . .

However this may be, what was the personal experience and mode of action of the great soul we are studying? She is evidently quite convinced that she was assailed by demons herself, more than once. She firmly believed in them; and based her belief upon the many occasions she had suffered from their attacks either spiritually or physically, whenever she had laboured with exceptional energy either for the benefit of the Church in general or some one soul in particular. She attributed to bad spirits, without hesitation, sudden acts of destruction for which no other explanation seemed possible. And when she finds herself in the presence of acts of hostile fury she exclaims: "This is a sure sign to me that God will here be more highly served than usual."

But in all these struggles that she had to go through, assuredly her attitude was never characterised by excessive credulity, least of all by fear; but by the two exactly opposite states of mind. More frequently she would not acknowledge in the actual demoniacal attacks anything more than "phantoms," which could readily be dissipated with the light of courage. "I can plainly see their

powerlessness," she says; "and, faithful to God, have nothing to fear. They are only strong against cowardly souls who give in to them without offering any resistance."

It is true, every Catholic is obliged to hold this belief. But there is a second, of a more delicate nature, which Teresa found infinitely harder to establish triumphantly. In the supernatural states that she passed through, ecstasies, visions, revelations, what was the agency at work in her? Was it God and His special Grace? Or was it the Devil with his illusions, his snares and his ambushes? On her first entry into the mystical life, pious spirits like Gaspar Daza, a most excellent priest, and Francisco de Salcedo, a nobleman well known in Avila for his religious zeal, could not bring themselves to believe her the object of such divine favours. They met and talked and discussed together at great length and told that in their opinion she was being tempted and beguiled by the Evil One. On more than one occasion she had the courage and also the misfortune to obey confessors who compelled her to make, as it were, an act of exorcism against the vision of Christ. Full as she was of charity but also of independence, she could never afterwards allude to this incident without feeling a desire to relieve her mind, so to speak, by the expression of her pity for those who, seeing the Devil in every thing, had put her through such an ordeal.

CHAPTER IV

THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE GIFTS—DOCTRINE HELD BY THE SAINT

“TO receive favours from God is a first grace, to understand the nature of the gift received is a second grace,” the Saint has observed. We have just seen by what means she became worthy of receiving the first of these graces. Her efforts were just as great to merit the second. Few people indeed have paid such honest and clear-sighted attention to experiences going on within their own minds as did St Teresa. In the *Relations* which she wrote to describe these internal conditions we repeatedly find such observations as the following:—“To my mind. . . . It is not an illusion on my part. . . . I noted it with the greatest attention.”—Or again: “In spite of her assurance and her certainty (she is speaking of herself) she was ever on the watch against being made the victim of an illusion.”¹ She also took great pains to notice exactly every shade of difference, never to describe anything without the most accurate indication of the whole circumstances connected therewith, and never to affirm anything except with a necessary amount of reserve. How many times for instance even in

¹ See *Letters*, iii. 143, 427, 437, etc.

the quotations that we have given, have we not read the words: sometimes . . . often . . .—She guards against laying down hard and fast rules, in cases where it seems to her that a number of causes might have been at work, and applies herself to the task of unravelling them.

She discerned the various causes with wonderful acuteness: they were three; nature, either healthy or morbid—the Devil—and God.

Nature, properly so called, arises above all from temperament, and has its completest expression in character. It must be admitted without doubt that God changes intellects and hearts as He sees fit. At the same time the famous patroness of mystics considers it an axiom that God usually leads every one in the way to which his individual character most inclines him, and there are none which may not end in sanctity. Some are led by love, others by fear. The “constitution” counts for something here, and when Don Lorenzo de Cepeda tried to account for certain external characteristics which accompanied his prayers his sister unhesitatingly offered his sanguine temperament in explanation.

If she kept account of such causes, she took still greater care to analyze the workings of the intellectual faculties; and in this department she becomes a real psychologist; quite spontaneously and without restraint. Five or six words of the current theological or scholastic terminology sufficed to enable her to recognize in her own personal experience the facts which they expressed.

When she has analyzed them in herself, she turns her mind to analyze the same experiences in other people; and in doing so she measures their digressions or excesses, just as at other times she measures the greatest possible compass and loftiness of their flight. She divines that will and love are intimately united. She delights to ponder upon the nature of the imagination, and in the discovery—suggested, it is true, by a learned doctor—that imagination is not to be confused with the understanding. She knows that in the inner world it is subject to natural impulses, which are “as impossible to stop as the celestial ones,” and for which neither intellect nor will are responsible. Or else she points out all the snares that the imagination scatters in the path of mystics, if, letting it always go its own gait, these higher faculties neglect to govern it by the principles which are their province: she sees the still greater peril where the mystic is willing to be satisfied with the sensuous pleasures of a too easy type of devotion.

See how confidently she marks the stages of this psychological deviation! Some souls are disposed to a kind of lazy and dreamy enjoyment, due perhaps to some natural weakness or to watchings and discipline, or to want of strength of constitution. Consider the first point. “In this estate there comes what might be termed a spiritual slumber (which is somewhat more than the aforesaid desirable consolation); they *imagine* that the one does not exist without the other, and *give themselves up* to a kind of intoxication.” Thus the imagination

yields to that instinctive attraction which works upon the senses; but the subject, which had power to resist it, abandons itself to this influence, and the effects of such surrender quickly make themselves felt. "This intoxicated state increases because their nature is weakened more and more—they *take it* to be a rapt and call it so (this is where a false judgment comes into play), whilst it is nothing but a pure waste of time and ruin to their health."¹

We can easily discern that all these analyses are made deliberately and purposely. But was that purpose mere psychological curiosity? No; for she who made them is careful to say more than once: "Our distresses and troubles more frequently come from this, that we do not know ourselves."

This self-knowledge has, however, its own dangers; it tends to make us dwell too much on our miseries, and thereby to discourage us. But it was useless for tactless confessors to try to keep their penitent to the depressing study of her own failings. Most surely she conscientiously took care to know her own failings thoroughly, nor did she shrink from avowing them; but anticipating both Pascal and Malebranche, she expounds in admirably well-chosen words, that man cannot understand himself properly until he knows himself in God, his creator and pattern. Now, that was exactly the method she employed; it is herself, whom, quite unconsciously, she makes a model for her sister nuns when she tells them that: "Now, in my

¹ *The Interior Castle*, "Fourth Mansions," chap. iii.

opinion, we never come perfectly to know ourselves, except we procure to know God. . . . Hereof is a double gain: The first, . . . our imperfection is better discovered by the Divine Perfections, The second is, that our Understandings and Wills are ennobled thereby, . . . Dwelling continually on the consideration of our own miseries, the stream will never run clear from the mud of fears, of pusillanimity and cowardice . . . I say, therefore, Daughters, that we must fix our eyes on Christ our chief good, and on his Saints . . . and the knowledge of ourselves shall not make us base and cowardly.”¹

Now we are able to understand why her sublimely exaggerated painting of her sins had neither tarnished the purity of her love, nor cooled her enthusiasm, nor broken her will. She knew—so far as a human creature can know—what God was and the nature of His infinite perfection. When she heard a Dominican friar demonstrate that God was really present everywhere around us and in all things, which she herself had apprehended, she trembled with delight: this metaphysical discovery was to her the true sequel to the lesson that she had so clearly realised of the distinction between the imagination and the understanding. But her knowledge of God was gained chiefly in her own intimate experiences, and in her contacts with Himself.

She first of all discovered there all God's working in her which went on without her co-

¹ *The Interior Castle*, “First Mansions,” chap. ii.

operation. Theology was not the only medium which enlightened her on this point. She had inward illuminations which enlightened without dazzling her. She questions, for example, how she is to distinguish between what is said by her understanding, and that which is dictated by the Spirit of God. And here she gives us a double explanation.

In the first place, there is as much difference between the words which come from our own consciousness and those which come from God, as between speaking and listening. But this is not the only difference. When we listen to God, are we listening to and understanding a being who speaks merely as we do? Not so at all. "The things, which are said by ourselves, work no effect at all; but the other, when our Lord is pleased to speak, is not only words but works; and, though they be not words of devotion, but of reprehension (fault finding), they instantly dispose the soul, and enable her to undertake anything for Him; they give light to and regale and appease her. And, if she were in state of dryness, and disquiet, and disorder, these words take all away and give instant and delicious peace; for it seems that our Lord's business is then to show His mighty power; and that His words are deeds."¹

There remains yet a third study for her to make, viz., the distinctive characteristics of demoniacal agency. The Devil in fact pushes himself in between man's own agency and God's. In her own case, in

¹ *Life*, xxv.

spite of the speed and ease with which she conquered the evil influence, she had leisure to study the subtlety of these attacks, and to see how, if God permitted it, they could completely upset not only what was best in human nature, but even those gifts which God had added of His bounteous goodness. The soul remains a free agent, free to purify all vile suggestions, and thus to turn to spiritual advantage even the most gross of temptations, but also free to trouble by pride and to debase by self-love the most precious gifts grace has brought it. To win free from the danger, courage is not always enough; it must be enlightened courage. Now the Saint saw clearly in her turn, what St Ignatius had seen, and St Catherine of Siena before him. The Devil has a power which we do not possess; his words too, like God's, produce effects—but what? and how are we to distinguish them from divine effects?

If they are contrary to the teaching of Holy Scripture we need not hesitate for a moment. “But there are other signs by which we can recognize the workings of the Devil. It seems, as if all good did hide itself, and flye from the Soul; so disgusted, and unquiet, and in so great disorder, doth she remain, without any one good effect at all. For, though there may be a seeming, as if there were a planting of good desires in her; yet they are not effective, or strong. The humility, which he leaves, is false, and without any suavity.”¹

To these distinctions which one is tempted to call “classics” of theology, is added one other, which is,

¹ *Life*, xxv. Cf. *Foundations*, vii., and *Way of Perfection*, xx.

I believe, peculiar to our Saint, and attests as much depth in the psychological explanation of her mystical experience as in that experience itself. It seemed to her that the Devil acts less upon our immaterial reason than upon that part of our soul which is connected with the senses. He tempts us through the imagination, and it is not sufficient for him to inflict upon us those seductive or gross images which we so often do wrong in regarding: he works to misrepresent all the others, and slides even into those which sprang originally from God or from His angels; he strives to intermingle some illusion or some lie or some indiscreet exaggeration. But he can only do this in imaginary visions: in the case of intellectual visions his power expires, or at least is considerably diminished; for "this kind of vision is so much a thing of Spirit, that there is no springing, or stirring in any of the Powers, nor in the Senses, by which means the Devil may be able to take foothold."¹

But we must stop this part of our study. We could go on endlessly, but we have collected enough to give us some sufficient idea of the authority with which such a soul contrives to make us accept a complete doctrine bearing upon the conduct of the spiritual life.

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Let us say at once that Teresa obviously did not create, nor even strictly speaking, did she discover this doctrine: for it is the Catholic teaching—one that the Fathers of the two Churches, the Greek and the Latin, had already settled. Had she been more

¹ *Life*, xxvii.

widely read, and so to speak more commonplace, the numerous doctors with whom she delighted to hold intercourse might have pointed out to her its main lines. But even when she was first born into the mystic life and was beginning to grow, the struggle between the learned doctors of the Church and herself had not been equal. The most learned could scarcely follow her; in order to understand her they were obliged to search through many a treatise with which they were unacquainted. What then had she read? She had read as we have seen the Letters of St Jerome, and the Confessions of St Augustine; also several works by Franciscans, and some of the writings of St Vincent Ferrer, certain vivid and imaginative expressions in whose works seem to have specially impressed her; but before all these, among the Fathers, she had studied Cassian and St Gregory the Great. The last two she quotes, and we have record elsewhere of the value she set on St Gregory: the copy which she used of the *Moralia* is preserved at the Convent of San José at Avila; it is full of her pencil markings: whole paragraphs are either underlined or marked in the margin with a long line, showing the special attention she had given them.¹ It is not therefore surprising that there are numerous points of contact between her teachings and those of the famous pope.

It is quite evident, however, from all we saw in the

¹ There are also in this copy some notes in ink; but, according to Father Grégoire de Saint Joseph, not in the Saint's handwriting. "The writing of these notes," he objects, "appears to me rounder than hers."

preceding chapter, that she had not only pondered over but experienced and lived these doctrines herself. Does she not wish us to realize this when she relates that God said to her once: "I will give thee a living book to read?" But any other hypothesis becomes superfluous when we read in chapter xii. of her *Life*. "There were divers years, when I was wont to read many spiritual things, and yet understood none of them; and there was afterward also a long time, when, though God gave me ability to understand, yet could I not speak a word wherewith to make it understood by others; and this point caused me no small labour. But, when his Divine Majesty hath a mind to teach it, he doth it so all at an instant, that I am amazed."¹

We can then compare a large portion of her teaching with that found in St Gregory; but we can always perceive her own distinctive touches, and this is how we shall know her. First of all, her excellent commonsense and her very practical habits of observation preserved her from certain excesses of theological and scriptural erudition; she shunned allegories "more ingenious than likely."² She neither ignored

¹ She declares too on more than one occasion that she preferred the great texts to the commentaries on them as subjects for meditation. "I have always bin more affected with, and the Words of the Gospels have sooner recollected me, than Books very accurately composed." (*The Way of Perfection*, xxi.)

² Abbé Saudreau, *The Life of union with God according to the great Mystics*, 1 vol. 12mo, Paris, 1900. This admirable work is the completion, from the historical point of view, of the same author's two volumes, *The Stages of the Spiritual Life*, 1897.

nor disdained the symbolism found in the Scriptures ; but in her application of it she showed exquisite taste in choosing the most poetical and that which most nearly approached to actual life. She even liked to give examples drawn from the life of the people : the "*norria*," the ass's foal, the infant at the breast which scarcely moves "its little lips" when its mother's milk falls abundantly into its mouth, the Castilian peasant who is bored to death because he does not know how to use a fortune which he has unexpectedly inherited. But above all she draws from her own personal experience and from the way she herself understood it. After all, this is her main source of information. We soon detect this from reading her writings where her teaching is constantly and inextricably intermingled with descriptions of her own condition of being, or with the accounts of the most remarkable events in her inner life. The advice that she gives does not in the least wear the didactic appearance of a treatise, but breathes ever the tender feeling of a soul anxious to be sparing with proofs and to share her happiness with those whom it was her daily charge to lead on to perfection.

Perfection is indeed the desired end, and it can only be attained through Union. But the ways leading thither are very different : different also are the powers which allow some to go further or others less far, in the road they have chosen or accepted for themselves. And so the Saint has advice and comfort to offer to all, whether great or small, novices or experienced devotees, to those who fervently love the contemplative life, and to those who

dislike it. She knew equally well how to moderate the zeal of the former and to rouse the latter to greater enthusiasm. It would almost seem that she foresaw the abuses no less than the heresies of the coming century, and worked beforehand to protect from temporary oblivion the urgent need for common-sense.

Before all other considerations it is necessary to understand the special needs or allowances of each individual's *condition of life*. It would be folly to "tell a married woman to displease her husband by passing in prayer the time that she owed to the care of her family." Married people, in general, if they live justly and continently deserve to have "the care of this world's goods" while hoping to enjoy God in His Kingdom; "their vocation demands no more of them." But those who desire to enjoy an immediate and full liberty of spirit ought to know what they are aiming at.

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Above all things they should be humble, not only before God, but to a certain extent in their bearing before others; for while they may be tempted in their regulated lives to be alarmed at everything, "peradventure, in something of main importance, they might very well learn from one, at whom they thus wonder."¹ But if no courage should be without humility, there must not on the other hand be humility without confidence, and consequently without courageous effort. Oh! how it weighed on her mind and how often she spoke bitterly of it—that

¹ *The Interior Castle*, "Third Mansions," chap. ii.

false humility which tends to petrify and stunt the soul! How she longed to unmask it! How often we shall find her insisting, again and again, upon the impassioned care that ought to be taken to distinguish false from true humility!

True humility is certainly the essential groundwork and the enduring basis of all religious life. When the Saint speaks of this virtue she pours forth an abundance of expressive metaphors: it is that daily bread with which we should eat the most dainty food of the mystical life; supernatural graces are like royal gifts, they are priceless and unchangeable; they are money lent which may be demanded back at any moment, a fortune which a sudden impulse of pride can annihilate in a second; whilst humility is like money always at the disposal of the possessor,¹ which is current everywhere, assured capital, a perpetual income, and though God accepts from us as payment all that we give Him willingly, nothing goes so near to putting us out of His debt so much as a sincere confession of our troubles and repentance for our misdoings. True humility again, is a safeguard against the subtle temptations which may even arise from realizing the possession of the favours. The more we strive for the good of others, the more we are liable to forget the dangers to which we ourselves are exposed. Now, we must never allow ourselves to slide into a deceptive state of security which precludes the fear of stumbling anew. But on the other hand the worst of all downfalls is one from which we erroneously believe

¹ *The Way of Perfection*, xix.

we have not strength to rise again,¹ fancying that if we grovel on the earth it is from a proper feeling of our abasement. This is the greatest peril of all, the subtlest, most hidden and most injurious artifice of the Devil.

The soul has no light left for any good: before it hovers the figure of justice whose judgment it awaits in shame and listlessness; whilst true humility is comforted by the very pain it suffers, looking upon it as a favour and a grace from God.

The soul where real humility reigns has started on the road to perfection. It knows that that road lies open to all; it knows that the imitation of the greatest Saints is not, in itself, forbidden to anyone. But does St Teresa advise people to aspire to the highest summits all at once? No, for valour must of necessity go hand in hand with prudence and discretion. It is pitiable to see souls trying to fly before God has given them wings. Let them first exercise those virtues which are within the reach of all without special interposition; all the Saints have followed precisely this course. "By supernatural, I mean what we cannot acquire for ourselves, no matter what care and diligence we bring to it. All we can do is to place ourselves at its disposal; and this disposition is an important point."² That done, we must just wait "in silence and hope."

The thing which is thus within the reach of all is meditation. The great soul who was destined to

¹ *The Way of Perfection*, xxxix. Cf. *The Interior Castle*, "First Mansions," chap. ii. *Life*, xxx.

² *Letter to Father Rodrigo Alvarez*, February 1576.

carry meditation so far above its ordinary methods and results, has been careful to give us, so to speak, the theory of it, and regulate its practice with minute attention.

She herself, as we have seen, had found it a difficult matter at the beginning of her mystical life. It was long before she could practise it without the aid of books of devotion. But it is evident that whilst often dipping into a few selected works of the Fathers of the Church, she depended chiefly upon the Gospels.¹ She recommended people to take successively a word, an act, a benefit, a trial, a sorrow of Christ to reflect upon; to try and search out the cause, to gauge the results, in short, to bring out from it all the lessons by which the soul desires to profit. Here everyone should select according to his own character. Certain minds made progress by the thought of hell; while others who are saddened by this thought are encouraged to seek God by thinking of Him in heaven. There are also souls for whom it is an excellent thing to meditate on death. "Some, if they be very tender-hearted, are too much troubled, if they always go ruminating upon the Passion; and regale themselves better, and profit more, by considering the Power and Greatness of God in his Works, and the Love he bears us; which they find to be represented to them in all his Creatures. And this is an admirable way of proceeding; but yet still we must neither forget, nor forbear to consider the Life and Passion of our Blessed Lord very often; that, in fine, being

¹ See above, p. 84, note 1.

the very thing from which all our good both ever did, and ever can arrive to us.”¹

If such a meditation is suitable for beginners, have those who are farther advanced the right to release themselves from it? There are those amongst the latter class—Teresa was well acquainted with them—who after having reached that point with great difficulty, experienced afterwards, strange though it may seem, no less difficulty in redescending from it. They have come to the stage of looking upon the mysteries as upon a picture; more than that, as in a *tableau vivant* where the actors use an unspoken language not understood by vulgar ears. It would be an effort to them to “discourse,” in other words, to meditate. Those who thus exercised themselves in the prayer of quiet and in contemplation, our Saint takes pains to remind that neither one nor the other have anything to gain by excluding “the intellect.” She draws an extremely fine distinction here. “This powerlessness to discourse,” she writes, “makes them believe that they cannot *think* on the sufferings of the Saviour, thereby deceiving themselves.”² “Words,” she says elsewhere, “should be like the light breath which relights an extinguished candle, and not like a stronger puff which would put it out if it were lighted.”³ Away with those ill-advised souls who fancy that by suppressing all life of the mind and every breath of thought they are making the best preparation for divine influences! By this they impose upon

¹ *Life*, xiii. ² *The Interior Castle*, “Sixth Mansions,” chap. vii.

³ *The Way of Perfection*, xxxi.

themselves a kind of artificial restraint which dries them up. This danger lurks not only for souls who, not feeling a vocation for the prayer of quiet, and fearful of backsliding, commit the folly of despising meditation; it exists too for those who very erroneously persuade themselves that the higher stages of spirituality demand the renunciation of thought, and with it a contempt for the holy humanity of the Saviour.¹ St Teresa had examples before her even then, in her own century and country. She was sparing in her comments on them, because she knew that she was accused of playing the learned doctor; but whilst sheltering her views under the recital of her own experiences and the explanation of what she felt to be her own vocation, she can bring forward too with emphasis the examples of the great Contemplatives who had preceded her. As the result of all her reflections she decided that it is to be wanting in humility to find a stumbling-block in the thought of the crucified humanity of the Lord; it is pride, it is rash folly . . . then growing step by step more fervent, she does not hesitate to call it a betrayal of Him who was incarnate only for our salvation. What! He came down to earth for us, He died upon the cross for us; and can there be found in the whole human race one single soul so proud as to believe that the thought of all He did and suffered can prove an obstacle to the raising up of our weakness?

If such is the duty of the more highly favoured

¹ See *Life*, xxii. and xxiii., and *Interior Castle*, "Fourth Mansions," iii.

souls what a comfort for the rest, for those who are at the base of the mountain, those who climb its steep with difficulty, to remember that the same aid is promised to all through the journey! Let all begin the race, and let all persevere in it, according as their state in life allows them much or little leisure! Without question it must never be forced. Whilst the poor soul is imprisoned in a mortal body it partakes of that body's infirmities: therefore it behoves the soul to go softly,¹ for to battle against obstacles, instead of being content to turn aside from them is but to aggravate its own evils, and possibly to reach the point of insanity, to which melancholy is too often the prelude. To accept with resignation and without discouragement all that seems to hinder us from our end, this too is a virtue: perhaps it is the greatest and the one by which we attain most surely the goal of which we had been tempted to despair.

Another outcome of the preceding advice is that souls must grow gradually and call to mind the true story of the life of the Castilian peasant, which would be an instructive allegory for them to ponder on. "He found a treasure, and the same being greater than his mind could contain, which was but low, having gotten this treasure in his power, he fell into such a melancholy, that he came by little and little to die out of mere affliction and care, by not knowing what to do with it. Whereas, if he had not found it all together, but that someone had given it him little by little, maintaining him with it by

¹ *Life*, xi.

degrees, he would have lived more contented than when he was poor, and it would not have cost him his life.”¹

In this patient and systematic climb external processes of devotion, such as tears and raptures, must not be despised by those who experience them, but far from seeking after them they should rather be shunned, or at all events moderated “for fear they are blended with imperfection and are in a large measure the work of natural disposition and the senses.” If any fall into that condition which some souls, who are eager for a pleasant path, sadly call “aridities,” he is reminded that for the Christian the crosses outweigh the consolations, and that the most highly valued of all blessings—peace and liberty of mind—are won by submission; he must consider too that the “feeble folk” who are too ready to bask in religious delights need to be pardoned rather than congratulated, if they dread exchanging them for “that inward strength of souls that God leads in ways of aridity.”²

It would be a still graver departure from truth to wish to become more sensitive to the love of God by being insensible to the many causes for joy or grief that nature or rather the will of God has provided for us—for both are equally necessary for us. Teresa speaks on this topic as Descartes and Malebranche spoke in their eloquent tirades against the Stoics.³ “Think not the business consists in

¹ *Life*, xxxiv. ² *The Interior Castle*, “Third Mansions,” chap. i.

³ Who knows? Both probably recalled her teaching—Malebranche certainly had read her.

apprehending, that, if my Father, or Brother die, I am so to conform to God's will, or not to resent it; or, if Sickness and troubles fall out, I must beare them chearfully. This is good, but sometimes proceeds from a certain Discretion, because we cannot remedy it, and so we make a Vertue of Necessity. How many such or other like things did the Heathen Philosophers, out of their Great Wisdome? Here are two things only which our Lord requires of us in these unions, to wit, the love of God and our Neighbour." But this said, let the well-ordered soul take courage and not be afraid of the two duties being ever incompatible. No indeed: for "our Nature being evil, except it spring from the root, namely the Love of God, we shall never perfectly enjoy that of our Neighbour."¹ We return then at last to the true character of perfection, which is courage—active courage. "The kind of prayer which is the most acceptable to our Saviour is that which produces the best results. And by that I do not mean that which yields immediate and abundant desires. Good desires are excellent in their way; but sometimes they are not such as our pride represents them to be. I call good results those which show themselves in works."²

The Saint penned these last lines, it is true, at more than sixty years of age, when she was in the

¹ *The Interior Castle*, "Fifth Mansions," chap. iii. Such lines as these addressed to St Teresa's brother are of frequent occurrence with her. "Always tell me of the happiness and harmony that reigns between you and your wife, and you will give me the greatest pleasure." (*Letters*, i. 7.)

² See *The Interior Castle*, "Sixth Mansions," viii. and ix.

midst of founding monasteries, and ruling, and fighting with her difficulties. But how many times she had said the same in her earlier days! How often she repeated this impassioned panegyric on courage and action! To combine action and contemplation, to know how to unite the character of a Martha and a Mary, to pray and to fight, that is the problem, the solution of which one is almost tempted to say tormented her, did one not see that in all things she was clear-sighted and of determined judgment.

In the Church militant where all struggle under the same head and for the same cause, the contemplative members are not those who have the smoothest tasks: and it would be a singular mistake to take them all for feeble and timid folk who placed themselves under protection from fatigue and danger. Very much the contrary! They are the standard-bearers! They need to be all the more courageous, as they have not the physical excitement of the fighters whom they rally and uphold. In what admirable terms has she who might well be called their patron saint defined this unregarded part!

“For though the Ensign fights not in the Battel, yet he is not therefore exempt from being in great hazard, and must needs in his interiour suffer more than all the rest; because, carrying the Colours, he cannot defend himself, and must not let them go out of his hands, though they cut him to pieces. So Contemplatives are to carry erected the Banner of Humility, and bear all the blows they give, returning none, because their duty is to suffer like Christ, and carry the Cross on high, not let it go out of

their hands, for whatsoever dangers: without shewing any weariness in suffering.”¹ She continues this discourse for the benefit of the souls who should succeed her in this post of honour. “Consider well what you do! Nobody takes much notice if a common soldier runs away, but if those placed at the head of others to lead them make a single step backwards, those behind in virtue are distressed and discouraged.” Therefore she constantly reminds her daughters of the duty of pressing forward, of not lingering in the transitory delights of an idle devotion, of praying not for the water which refreshes, but for the wine which gives a holy glow that makes light of all suffering.

Possibly at this juncture the reader, although admiring this magnificent language, may be unable to restrain his astonishment. But at all events he will desire to penetrate further into the inner consciousness of this amazing spirit, which conceived that from the depths of a nun’s cell she could work upon the Church, and aspired to serve the interests and glory of the Creator of all things by extinguishing within her all the joys of life. Many I know will still readily accept the reply that first comes to mind, that the contempt of physical enjoyment and of worldly frivolity does not exhaust, but increases the springs of spiritual energy and joy. But many will also persist in asking what this fear of a passive condition and this praise of action means in a Carmelite nun who only became the friend of mortifications and the apostle of asceticism, in

¹ *The Way of Perfection*, xviii.

order to put them at the service of the most exclusively contemplative of lives. Here clearly, we touch upon the thorny question of suffering. Has not the reformer of Carmel raised sorrow to the position of the supreme law of our world? Has she not at all costs willed it, sought for it, and laid it upon us, at least by her example and by the influence of the institutions that she founded? In short, was it not she who said: "Either suffer or die"?

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Well, no! St Teresa did not exactly say that, or if we prefer it, she did not say it in exactly the words, or the acceptation which have hitherto been taken as sacred. This was not one of the least services rendered her by the last translator of her letters, who has corrected this traditionary belief.

In a letter written to an unknown Carmelite nun,¹ the Reverend Mother aptly remarks: "to die or to suffer, such ought our desires to be." But here Father Grégoire de Sainte-Joseph adds in a note: "We ought to point out that the Saint nowhere said: to suffer or to die: this is a mistranslation; this sentence, which is found several times in the writings of the Seraphic Mother, always puts the desire to die first." I do not know whether this transposition will very much re-instate the aphorism in the mind of people of the world: I doubt it. But, in point of fact, the difference is by no means small. "Either to suffer or to die," would seem to place suffering as a thing desirable in itself, and so essen-

¹ *Letters*, ii. 312.

tially precious, that life is worth nothing without it. What Teresa really prayed for was either death; which was to her thinking—let us note this carefully—the final deliverance, the perfect joy, the happiness without end and without danger; or a life which merited this reward, and merited it by passing through trials. She explains it often and specially in the following revelation, which was for a long time unpublished. “On the feast of Saint Mary Magdalene, I was thinking what love I owed to our Lord for what He had told me about this Saint; I earnestly longed to follow in her steps when His Majesty granted me a great favour, saying: ‘Redouble thy zeal; henceforth thou shalt serve me better than before.’ I then felt the desire for a time in which to gain in graces, and experienced a lively feeling of determination to bear suffering.”¹

She by no means claims, then, that this cry ought to be the universal cry of all human beings. She even says the contrary, and in more than one way. Impelled first of all by charity she says: “There should be a great distinction made between desiring suffering oneself and seeing one’s neighbours suffer.”² On this account she abstained from longing for certain trials to visit even those whom she most wished to sanctify, if these tests would pain others whom God, perhaps,—she could not say—would “lead by other ways.” As regards herself, we have already seen that she had more than one motive for wishing to suffer, which she enumerates plainly in one of her *Relations*, written at the age of forty-five.

¹ *Letters*, iii. 445.

² *Letters*, ii. 336.

Moreover—it scarcely needs stating—that which she longs for, and of which she has had a foretaste, is so grand that it is worth paying for with all the suffering earth can produce. There are moments when everything is not only indifferent to her, but harasses and irritates her; and nothing can console her then but the sacrifice she makes of all her desires. “Everything is insipid to me,” she writes in one of those moments, “when I see I cannot attain my will and desire.” God had however endowed her with many favours; none knew it better than she did. But precisely on account of them, her state was perilous. “Other people’s virtues seem much more meritorious than my own, for all I do is only to receive favours. The Saviour will give to others all at once what He wishes to grant me on earth; therefore I implore Him not to reward me in this world; but if He leads me by that way it must be, I am persuaded, because of my weakness and sinfulness.”¹

It is by this sublime unconsciousness of her own worth, by this vivid dread which tortured her from one time to another of being deprived of the eternal paradise, because she had enjoyed too much on earth the paradise of mystical delights, that she escapes from arrogance on account of her revelations and ecstasies. She is aided there’in by incessant meditation on the Passion of Him who sustains her; for can that really be called love which aspires to a different lot from that of the being beloved? Let us listen to her once more. “When I am at prayer, it would often be impossible to me, in spite of all my efforts,

¹ *The Interior Castle*, “Seventh Mansions,” chap. iii.

to ask Him for pleasures or to desire them, whilst He, when on earth, had only the Cross as His lot." Such, indeed, is the feeling of all the Saints. It does not mean—most certainly it does not with our heroine—an unhealthy desire, stoical rigour or rash presumption. Nothing of this nature is to be met with either in her teaching or in her mind. She even goes out of her way to tell us that one of the effects of the life in Jesus Christ is indeed "a great desire for suffering, but a desire which causes no disquiet at all." And indeed, why should there be disquiet, when our confidence rests in God, not in ourselves? In the *Relation* quoted a little further back, the old editions gave the reading: "I entreated Him to send me trials and grant me the grace to bear them." The new translation restores to us a fraction of a phrase which suggests a more human kind of humility and consummate prudence. "Nevertheless I pray Him *before all else* to grant me the grace to bear them."

But others should do as much as this: for none, she believed, could be weaker than she was. When sufferings come, she talks of them; she even talks of them a good deal, but without any ostentatious parade. Sometimes she takes advantage of them to show, as if by the way, how much can be borne, and declares that she sometimes "laughed" to herself to find that she came through them all in spite of her health. At another time she takes them as an argument to prove that she is useless, good for nothing, and to direct others—for her teaching is always based upon her own experience

—not to be so silly as to think it is a failing to look after one's own health. Finally, to crown it all, she draws from them the humble confession: "I was not made for suffering," meaning: "I want to do things too much for myself and cannot endure powerlessness." Are all these ideas and confessions contradictory? No, but there is, as it were, a rivalry between two desires which she wished, each in its turn, to awake in everyone, and these are equally sincere in her great soul: a desire to be made worthy through action and also through suffering.¹

That these two desires are ultimately compatible in anyone who does not confuse action, as is so often done with disturbance and agitation, the life we are studying is at hand to prove. Before resuming its career, let us pause for a moment to throw a backward glance over the course of those supernatural phenomena which the Saint not only experienced in her own person, but explained in their nature, and determined in their workings.

Is it needful to sift each circumstance and to weigh the various symptoms separately, in order to judge where they differ from purely nervous disorder? Let us look at them as a whole and include the complete course, and especially let us be ready to examine into the prolonged after consequences. The ecstatic, the seer, the receiver of supernatural messages, was no visionary. She had been harassed by the need of that very type of action which is more human and earthly, and

¹ On this union of the love of suffering with action, see the *Psychology of the Saints*, chap. v.

struggles against material difficulties, and turns them into practical results; she had always been eager for conflicts, and as often as she humbled herself before the joys won from the favours which descended on her from above, so often, when she was persecuted, her Castilian pride rose to such a pitch that—she herself informs us—she felt then “like a queen whose whole empire is subject to her.” And indeed this was no illusion: everything in the end perforce bowed down and gave way to her. She suffered much physically, but her soul shone forth and filled all things with its victorious influence. She writes artlessly: “I do not understand how these two things can go together, but I know that it happened in that way.”

Is it rash of us to try and explain what she (too humbly) acknowledged she did not understand? Of the two methods of action—that of effort, of resistance, of motion, and the action without movement which Aristotle rightly attributes to his God, who is all thought¹ and “pure act”—the Carmelite nun of Avila gave up neither of these.

It is hardly needful to remind my readers that she much preferred the second type and found it, I will not say pre-eminently, through suffering, but certainly more often through suffering accepted in the spirit in which she accepted it. To add that she subordinated the active kind to the passive is

¹ Conceiving him as he must in his infinite perfection. In the Supreme Being the first method of action, being perfect, excludes the other. It does not exclude it in the finite being, where both methods are imperfect.

to say—what is a fact—that the former held a very large place in her life. For it is in those moments where she thinks it her duty to demand much from nature for the accomplishment of the temporal part of her mission, that she gives herself up to regrets for the miseries and infirmities which prevent her from rushing to meet the calls that come to her to go forth spreading the Kingdom of God among men. To sum up all, she knew how to use both methods and bore through both the courage which seems specially to belong to the one, no less than the unalterable serenity which is the ideal condition of the other. If she longed to feel, now and then, the martyrdom of suffering which the illustrious Greek had refuted as folly, it was because she brought to it a power of love unknown before Christ: also because she could not understand a love which was not mingled with passionate impatience and resignation to the just necessity of earning the hoped-for reward by trials heroically borne.

Once more let us recapitulate: this contemplative soul was one of the most active spirits that humanity has known. Whence then did she derive the necessary strength? Out of that very drama of her supernatural life. But if that had been a mere natural affection, would not the victim have come out depressed and prostrate? Well, it was the very moment when this life seemed to be drawing to its end, the very day when, at anyrate, she put her mind in order by the abatement of her great mystic upheavals. Those upheavals which had seen

the beginning of what, from the human point of view, was her strictly active life.¹ She certainly began with none too brilliant health, but with a stronger will than ever, and a moral energy that nothing seemed capable of impairing. What psychologist or neuro-pathologist would undertake to explain a display of activity which did not produce, but followed, the supposed malady?

We will not, however, neglect any hypothesis. We will suppose someone to say: it is quite a simple matter, she was cured!—A very remarkable cure, I reply, and the annals of medicine have not many such to enrol. But does this suggestion [even tally with the facts? There is no doubt that at the point in her life at which we have arrived, the inner work of sanctification seemed to be finished; the external work of the reformer and founder was about to begin. But to accomplish this second task, was it necessary, perhaps, for the Virgin of Carmel to be “cured” of all the joys and sufferings she had gained by the first? Did she forget them as the convalescent forgets his delirious nightmares,

¹ According to the Carmelite of Caen, it was several years later, at the end of her priorate of the Encarnacion that this change was brought about, that “the look of the dove gave place to that of the eagle, and, ceasing to be rapt in visions which she could not control, she took that complete possession of herself which was borne out in her works.” I believe indeed that this change was not sudden, and that at the time of which the Carmelite of Caen speaks the Mother was stronger than ever before. However, we must not forget that at this period she had already founded eight convents (of the Reformed Order reformed by her) and in consequence she had shown herself equal to the trials of an extremely active life.

and the distortions of his nervous system, when they are happily at an end? Very far from it. What was it that she wished to establish at the cost of so much opposition, so many schemes, so many journeys, except a group of institutions which should permit of the training of those very contemplatives to whom she intended to pass on the labour of bearing on high the Cross, the standard of the Catholic hosts? In short, she is so capable and so persevering simply because she is still filled with the blessings derived from her mystical life, and because at all costs she longs to help others to that of which she has preserved the understanding and the love.

CHAPTER V

THE REFORMER

THE work of the reform and that of the foundation of monasteries were closely connected with one another in the life of St Teresa, and we must give the incidents consecutively in the same account, if we follow strict chronological order. It seems, however, more logical to examine the two tasks separately. It was indeed the reform which led to the foundations, and these had no other object than to consecrate, strengthen, and spread the reform. To explain how the Saint undertook and designed this reform we need not wait until its results had proved it triumphant by subjecting it to the test of opposition. Taking the liberty to anticipate a little here and there, let us endeavour to get a comprehensive view of it in its principles and its entirety.

Teresa, then, was about forty-five or forty-six years of age when she experienced in her inner life two shocks, the effects of which were to be singularly far-reaching.

The first was a vision of hell. She tells us that this was a subject which she rarely searched into, since her mind was little given to following the way of fear. But one day in the course of her prayer

she found herself introduced to the place of torments, from which what she calls her conversion had saved her. She first of all suffered physical tortures, of which her former suffering had given her no conception, and she adds: "But these bodily tortures are nothing in comparison of that continual agonizing of the soul, that pressing, that stifling, that extremely sensible affliction, together with that desperate and torturing discontent and disgust which I am no way able to express."

After such a vision she considered that she must not rest satisfied with ordinary efforts, since, while up to this time she had desired to serve God, and had neither wished evil to anyone, nor committed any grave sin, she had been shaken to the very depths of her soul by so terrible a warning. Nothing of the tribulation which yet might be in store for her in this life seemed to her to be able to dismay her any more. She felt it imperative upon her to make herself worthier of the glories of heaven, and she sighed after a manner of life which should draw her still nearer to it.

On the other hand, she pondered more fervently than ever upon souls who were then on the way to destruction. She wept bitterly over the Lutheran heresy which ravaged France: and felt that face to face with such catastrophes she could not allow herself a single moment's rest. What, however, could be done? "I should not have been afraid," she wrote, "to go alone to struggle against the Lutherans, and to point out to them their errors." But she was a woman: the life of public preaching

was forbidden her. It was at this juncture when, these two ideas simultaneously coming into her mind, she determined that, since Our Lord was losing followers every day, she ought, at least, to help to obtain for Him others more faithful.

The first form this idea took in her was a sort of consolatory impulse towards Him whom she loved: when it seemed others wished to crucify Him afresh, she and several followers would go and throw themselves at His feet, as did the holy women. But very soon a more militant idea presented itself to her mind; since the enemy was invading the kingdom and bringing desolation into it it was incumbent upon her to retire with a picked band into an impregnable fortress. . . . Is not that what a prince does, when he will not despair? From the town to which he has retired "he makes frequent sallies and as he takes none but brave men with him to the battle, he frequently does more mischief to the enemy with a handful of men than if he had larger but less valiant troops at his command." Most important of all is it that there should be no traitors in his band.

This was the nature of her reflections at that time, and they came indeed as the conclusion of twenty years of meditation and prayer. As we have said, she did not know the meaning of the word doubt. Therefore, while she desired the refutation of error, it was not so much for the proof of religious truth she was concerned. The great question was that God should be served and loved; that kings should protect His honour, leading their people

towards Him, that no friends should forsake or betray Him. To her indeed the arch-enemy was what she called "treachery." Who then did she think merited this supreme stigma? Satan, Judas, Luther, and those who followed him, and finally (with a backward glance of profound remorse upon herself) those who, having known the state of prayerful contemplation, have given it up.

It agreed well with her character that she should think of a chosen few rather than of a legion. Although she felt within her a growing pity and charity, although she had told herself in all truth and sincerity that she would give her own life up a thousand times over to save a single soul; she could not help wishing for, and thinking it necessary to have, an aristocracy even in religion. Certainly the privileges which she meant to confer upon it were those of suffering and penance, with the honour of being placed in the forefront of danger. But because of this she maintained more tenaciously than ever, that even for the universal good and for the salvation of the human race, "a single perfect soul was of more value than a host of vulgar ones."¹

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When therefore a young relative in course of pious conversation one day in the Convent of the Encarnacion was suddenly inspired to talk of a foundation which should be more restricted, and contain a few select souls anxious to live a more perfect life, the Saint did what all souls born to do

¹ See the Relation of 1561-1562, *Letters*, iii. 377, *The Way of Perfection*, iii., and the beginning of the *Foundations*.

great things have done and will ever do: she seized this possibly random idea, as it were, in its flight; she saw that it exactly corresponded with her inmost projects and from that time she never gave it up. She decided to found a new convent where she, together with a few nuns, could carry out the primitive rule of Carmel.

One of the most salient traits of her character was that her heroic courage was united with good judgment sharpened by the most keenly penetrative powers of observation. We are not to be surprised, then, at the lively and almost merry spirit which was combined with her lofty principles. It was habitual with her, specially in advancing life. Now, as she said, she desired an aristocracy; and she had many reasons to advance in its favour.

In the first place, under no circumstances did she care to see many women together. In a letter where she gives advice concerning a girls' boarding school upon which she had been consulted, she replied: "To my thinking there is as much difference between bringing up girls in large numbers when they are compelled to live together, and bringing up youths, as there is between black and white! I repeat that for young girls so much noise ought not to be allowed."¹ But this sagacious and shrewd observer does not hesitate to generalise; for she adds in the course of the same letter: "experience has taught me what a house full of women is like. God preserve us from such a state!"² She was

¹ Letter of 25th July 1573.

² In a letter of February 1581 (*Letters*, iii. 109) she puts it even

evidently thinking of the Convent of the Encarnacion in spite of the pains she always took to speak of it with a very necessary reserve.

It is easy to discover the reason for this criticism. First, if a prioress takes in too many novices, she will find it hard to know them all properly, and the confessors too will find it just as difficult. Listen to this (it was addressed to a discalced Carmelite): "It is very delightful of you¹ to tell me that you know this young lady's character at first sight. We women are not so easily understood as that. When you have confessed them some years you yourself will be amazed to find how little you have understood them; they do not give an accurate account of themselves in exposing their faults, and you judge them only by what they tell you."

She thought, no doubt, that the number could be increased with less inconvenience in an active Order where the tasks and responsibilities are kept distinct, where the various groups are each occupied with separate work. But in the contemplative life, where all pursue the same end together, she saw it in quite another light. She had observed in the Encarnacion how agglomeration inevitably tends to factions and divisions upon the least provocation, but especially over an election. She had been able

more strongly: "From these two points (the narrow-mindedness of certain confessors and the taking in of too great a number of nuns into the convents) I have feared more fatal results than from any others."

¹ Letter of 21st October 1576. Father Bonix translates this: "You make me laugh when you tell me," etc.

too to ascertain how the least division creates on those occasions a lasting unsettlement in some minds, leading a certain number to seek out by all manner of ways those who think or do not think with them, to suspect some, to flatter others, to treat in short these or those according to the expectation they have or have not of being able to attach or gain them over to their opinion and to their side. She also observed that if some one member were discontented with the prescribed order of things, the effect of her ill humour could not but spread and fester, in a convent too full of nuns. For on this point she expressed herself in terms which she alone could have allowed herself, so to speak, to use: "Believe me, I dread a discontented nun more than a legion of devils."¹

Yet another important reason guided her, although it was destined to become perhaps more secondary. She intended her daughters to practise absolute poverty; she even wished at the outset that her convents should be founded without means of support. Thus she wrote to her brother: "None of our houses are to exceed thirteen in number. We could not be more than that, since our Constitution orders that we shall ask nothing for ourselves, which is a great austerity, but that we live on alms put into the charity box." Upon these two points, however, she modified somewhat her initial views, although as little as possible. It was easily shown to her that with the regimen of the convent life invalids were not

¹ *Letters*, iii. 177. She certainly did not fear devils much personally.

rare, and that the little community might find itself too reduced to maintain the office of the choir. She increased the number after this time to twenty-one. But she so fully intended to keep to it, that in order not to risk either exceeding this number, or refusing a likely applicant, she was always careful to keep one place open.¹

Upon the question of revenues her hesitation lasted longer and the struggle was much sharper. Her first feeling was that it would be better to live protected from all temporal cares, and therefore to be assured of the necessities of life. Afterwards she reproached herself for want of faith and considered that people would be equally free from this anxiety if not disturbed about any temporal things, but depended on Providence for everything. On more than one instance, she declared that Our Lord Himself commanded her to found convents without revenues: she also exhorted her spiritual daughters to be faithful in keeping this rigorous habit, and she attempted to have it authoritatively established by a brief obtained from Pope Paul IV., which empowered the reformed Carmelites to live exclusively by voluntary contributions. Later, the decrees of the Council of Trent were used by her advisers to induce her to modify her system. She herself saw that the voluntary lack of any source of revenue had

¹ It is a tradition (I have gleaned it from San José de Avila) that during her life, at the time when she was going from convent to convent, they used to reserve her place, in the hope of keeping her for some time. Thus, it is the custom in Spanish convents to call the last comer "she who occupies the place of the holy mother," or "St Teresa's novice."

been most excellent in the early stages, since it had dispensed with the need of waiting for the good pleasure of benefactors, and she had shown what could be done by the spirit of perfection in the first nuns; but, the spirit of her reform once firmly established, the Constitutions faithfully observed would be sufficient to make poverty the recognized order of things.

There was, finally, a third point upon which she had to consider her first decision. She had had first planned to dispense with lay sisters, and thus make the nuns fulfil all the household offices in turn. She quickly gave up this idea "because she said that such heavy physical labour stifled the spirit." She took precautions, however, against having more lay sisters than were needed, and, as Ribera tells us, she kept to the customs which she had studied with the Franciscan sisterhoods, "poverty of fare and the simple and free manners with which the nuns treated one another."

In the final solution of this last problem, the second of the two tendencies to which the Saint submitted in her work of reform becomes manifest: to restrict, as it were, the body as much as possible, to rein in the senses very tightly and everything that belongs to physical welfare or comfort; but, the mortification of the senses once assured, by this means, to give the utmost liberty of mind to the nuns in their spiritual life. This last concern she felt as strongly as the first. She reiterates it in many of her discussions: nuns are not slaves. She would not allow anyone—neither sister, nor mistress,

nor prioress, nor confessor, nor visitor—to impose anything upon them beyond the rules, or to burden them with “fresh ceremonies.” They might “enforce the rules” as much as they chose, well and good! but beyond that it was to be a question for each individual conscience to decide.

In order that each conscience should be assured of its liberty to follow its own particular course the reformer peremptorily insisted that the sisters should not be obliged to have the confessor of their Order alone, and no other. Was it simply a question of that distinction, consecrated by the Council of Trent, between ordinary and extraordinary confessors (these latter however being appointed for the office)? It would seem indeed that St Teresa wished to go even further than this. “She wanted,” says Ribera, “to allow her daughters full liberty, as much for general as for particular direction, to deal with those who might best suit their individual souls.” This question has raised many long and heated controversies: and this is surprising, for, in the first place, the Saint’s intentions are unmistakable: she had expressed them too well.

“As for myself, my daughters, one of my dearest vows is that you should always have this holy liberty to communicate with others than the ordinary confessor and the friars of the Order. Thus, I ask those who may hold the office of prioress, for the love of Our Lord, to spare no efforts with the bishop or provincial to keep this sacred liberty always intact . . . since as there are here men who combine holiness of life with soundness of doctrine . . . the

nuns ought on no account to be prevented from having free intercourse with them.”¹

In a letter of February 21st, 1581, she argues with the utmost energy with Father Gracian:² “The prioress of Segovia has drawn my attention to the question of the liberty the sisters enjoy in asking for sermons from others than our own Fathers, and after reflection I have continued them this liberty. We must not only look, my Father, on the superiors we now have over us, but look forward to those who may come and who may meddle with this point and others. Insist then, please, with all your might that the Father Commissary shall state this and the matter I spoke to you about the other day, as clearly and conspicuously as possible. If it is not settled, we must have recourse to Rome. I know how vital this is to the peace of mind of the sisters. I know further what terrible distress they endure in other convents where their freedom in seeking spiritual help is too greatly curbed; a soul so bound cannot serve God properly: the Devil tempts her by this means. Whereas, on the other hand, if the nuns have liberty of choice, for the most part they attach no importance to it, and do not avail themselves of it.”

These words, I think, are clear enough and it seems to me difficult to find anything more decided. It is as easy to recognize that they agree, both with the bitter lessons she learnt by experience

¹ *The Way of Perfection*, v.

² The text has been translated for the first time in the recent edition of Father Grégoire de Sainte-Joseph, iii. 97.

and with the personal efforts she was so often driven to make in order to resolve her own doubts.¹

We need to go a little deeper into this much debated question, if we would know to what jurisdiction St Teresa wished that her convents should be subject.

Let us take the facts first of all. When she founded San José de Avila she left the Carmelites'

¹ We ought perhaps to say : to resolve the doubts of others, at least with regard to her vocation, which many misunderstood.— Later, those who were displeased at this liberty endeavoured to restrict it, and they claimed to support their objections on passages in her writings in which they professed to see the proof of a change of opinion, as on the questions of the lay sister and of revenues. Their very fine drawn arguments cannot overcome the formal declarations of St Teresa and the testimony of those of her contemporaries (Ribera, Yepès) and of those of her daughters (such as Maria de San José) who knew her best. Have they searched out their texts a little too cleverly? It is not for us to enter into this part of the debate. What seems evident and sufficient to us, after thoroughly reading the various explanations of the subject, is that the Mother never modified her expression of opinion on this point, which she had so much at heart. It is quite likely she sometimes found it wise that such and such a nun in such and such a convent should keep to her ordinary confessor, that of the Order. Yet she is careful to add immediately : " You can, besides, permit her to go now and again to Father Rodrigo Alvarez " (*Letters*, ii. 448). The advice adapted to one particular case had not then the general bearing of the passages which we have read above. In other circumstances she advised them to apply to the Jesuits ; then she wished to try and do without them (*Letters*, iii. 193), which, we may notice in passing, proves that she never intended to bind either herself or her daughters. She therefore recognised the right to vary her advice according to the persons and circumstances. But whilst doing so, she kept—or rather, we will say, she consecrated—the principle of liberty, free to regulate it, according to time and place, by directions adapted to forestall all danger of caprice and inconsistency.

jurisdiction and placed herself under that of the bishop. Quite from the beginning she said very clearly in her *Life*, "I accepted an obedience which was not to my liking." Notwithstanding that, she gained "great comfort and peace thereby." "I found it a hard task to free myself from obedience to my Order; but the Lord had told me that it was not meet that the new convent should be subject to it, and He even condescended to show me His reasons. . . . The subsequent events proved to me how important it was to place ourselves in subjection to the bishop." These reasons were derived from actual circumstances and have nothing mysterious about them. It was a question of founding a convent without revenues, and yet it was necessary for the inmates to live. If they flung themselves upon the charity of the faithful, it was absolutely imperative for them to have the support of the bishop, also that of the town council. We read therefore in a memorandum sent to the Chapter of Alcalá,¹ "As the Order refused to admit this convent under its jurisdiction, we submitted it to the Ordinary. The bishop of that time was called Don Alvaro de Mendoza. He was very favourable to us during his stay at Avila; he always gave us bread and necessary medicines and a crowd of other alms. When he decided to leave the See of Avila for that of Valencia, he himself undertook the task of putting us under the jurisdiction of the Order: this measure seemed to him to redound more to God's glory, and we were all of his opinion." They had even anticipated this council, for if the

¹ *Letters*, iii, 93.

devout Mother expresses herself in terms that may be called official, we see distinctly in her correspondence another strategic move as regards the bishop. He alone, she seemed to imply, unquestionably deserved to be the exception which had been made; it would be rash to renew it. "As to the necessity," she writes to him (in August 1577) ¹ "and the plight we might find ourselves in, because our bishop will not trouble himself more over our convents, do not be distressed: *our convents, by lending each other mutual aid, will do themselves more good than by relying upon their bishop.*" True, when she had written this, she hastened to soften it down by adding: "for we shall never have another whose charity equals that of your lordship. If, further, we might but have the pleasure of your presence in this town! All our troubles come from being deprived of it."

There is no doubt, then, that the reformer preferred remaining with all her other convents, under the jurisdiction of one single Order, to being under an isolated episcopal jurisdiction (however useful such might have been in the earliest stages). In a letter to Father Gracian of December 1576, she expresses herself with more vigour, because there was no need for reserve in a private communication: "I am quite persuaded that no remedy will be found for our convents so long as *there is no one of the family* to direct them. Although laxity indeed easily exists in convents subject to monks, there are not so many abuses as in those subject to the Ordinaries. What

¹ *Letters*, ii. 117.

goes on in the latter is a matter that appals me.”¹ But need the jurisdiction be necessarily that of the Order of Carmelites? Here is another question which has caused rivers of ink to flow. Those who decide in the affirmative have on their side the very passage I have just quoted. The question is to a certain extent complicated by the existence of two kinds of Carmelites, the Calced, or Mitigated, and the Discalced, or Reformed Carmelites.² Now a long way back it became abundantly evident that Teresa was endeavouring by all means in her power to avoid the jurisdiction of the Mitigated. “Oh! how I wish to see the nuns delivered from the jurisdiction of the Mitigated. That is the cause of all the trouble.” Did she want it *at all costs*? We may well hesitate upon this point, for I believe she herself hesitated over it. In a fragment of a letter³ of August 1578, she discusses almost with anguish the possibility of escaping from the jurisdiction of the Mitigated. “You could,” she says to her (unknown) correspondent, “give it out, not as if you had it from the Carmelites, but as if you had guessed it, that they would pass under the jurisdiction of the Ordinary

¹ This fragment has just been translated into French for the first time. Nowadays when a certain policy appears desirous to reinstate the exclusive jurisdiction of the bishops over all religious Orders, the reader will no doubt see that it is worth while studying these testimonies of St Teresa.

² We must insist here on this point, the better to explain what followed on the reform of the Carmelites, and the famous struggle to which it gave rise.

³ Either not translated into French or completely unpublished before the work of Father Grégoire de Sainte-Joseph. See *Letters*, ii. 263.

rather than consent to see the Mitigated Carmelites undertake the visiting direction of them. . . . Inasmuch as we are Reformed Carmelites we might have objected to accept the government of the Mitigated Fathers, of whom we have already had experience." But this was a kind of diplomatic threat of which, it seems, she was afraid she might make a bad use; for she adds:¹ "I should not wish at the same time to do such a thing, at least not unless we were completely lost; for truly it would be a terrible affliction to the sisters not to be the subjects of the General of the Order any more. . . . God grant they may never be in the necessity you know of, and separated from the jurisdiction of so good a pastor! May he deign to forgive him who has sown the discord." Finally she ended by returning to that which at heart engrossed her more than anything else. "The question of the greatest importance is the constitution of a separate province for the Discalced Carmelites."

Such then are the principal elements of this problem of which the Bollandists were unwilling to undertake the resolution.² They may be summed up, we think, in the following manner:—

The jurisdiction of the Ordinary seem to St Teresa something quite exceptional and—something, in fine, to be avoided.

She clung to the jurisdiction of those who were "of the family"; but in this divided family she was

¹ And this too is translated into French for the first time.

² It is true that they had no access to several documents since discovered.

anxious, and held staunchly to shaking off the jurisdiction of the Mitigated.

Finally, however, she seemed to wish to reserve the right of asking, according as the occasion demanded, such changes of jurisdiction as should be absolutely needful.¹

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However interesting these particular questions are, there is another which raised still greater controversy if possible—and this is of more interest to us. Was it really St Teresa herself who drew up the constitutions of the Reformed Carmelites?

We must not take advantage of those passages where with her customary humility she speaks of the constitutions which, she says, “were given us by our superiors.” Most certainly the final code, approved, sanctioned, and promulgated had been *given* to the Carmelites and to their reformer herself, who held it a point of honour to be no more than one among the rest. But it cannot for a moment be doubted that she was the inspirer, that it was she who instigated, and even drew up the considerable portion of them. Not only do the most competent of her contemporaries, such as Ribera, affirm it many times, and in the most exact terms; but the Saint has

¹ Father Bouix had published a letter in which the Saint expressed regret at being unable to put the Carmelites under the direction of the Society of Jesus, the constitutions of the Society forbidding it. . . . Father Grégoire de Sainte-Joseph found in the comparison, or rather the irreconcilable opposition of dates, the most serious reasons for doubting the authenticity of the letter. See *Letters*, i. pp. 26-29.

often acknowledged it or has left incontrovertible proofs of it in her correspondence.

First of all, a Brief of February 7th, 1562, confirmed by a Bull of July 17th, 1565, gave to her and to her nuns, "liberty and free power" to make the statutes and laws, and decreed that "the said constitutions and laws" should be thereafter "kept inviolable."

This work then, which resulted in the constitutions,¹ was her doing, and she submitted them to Father Pedro Hernandez (the Dominican) who approved them.

Accepted by Don Alvaro de Mendoza, approved by Pius IV., the constitutions of the Saint were followed at San José de Avila, when in 1567, Father Rubeo visited this convent and gave power to the Saint to found fresh convents. He adopted for them the constitutions observed at San José de Avila and "charged St Teresa to add to the ordinances that she had drawn up at Avila all that she might think necessary for that purpose," so

¹ The original text of these constitutions still existed in the last century. A friar of the Order, Father Antonio de San Joachim, says in the collection entitled *Año teresiano* (vol. vii. p. 119): "The laws which St Teresa drew up for the nuns of her first convent of San José exist to-day in their original form, that is to say, in her hand-writing; they are not printed. They are in our archives at Madrid and form a quarto of 24 pages." This precious manuscript has not yet been rediscovered. It was printed, but apparently with omissions, in 1678. The Archbishop of Toledo, in giving his sanction, expressed himself thus: "These are the constitutions that Mother Teresa of Jesus, foundress of the Order of Discalced Carmelites drew up during her life for the government of the same Order."

that these constitutions "might extend to a great number of convents."¹ It was, then, to these first constitutions that the Mother referred several times in her letters of 1578 (22nd May), 1579 (21st December) and 1580 (20th December) saying, for instance, to a nun of another Order: "We have our constitutions, *demandé* by me, which protect us. . . ." Nevertheless by virtue of a brief from Gregory XIII. (dated June 22nd, 1580), a Chapter had to be held at Alcalá for the purpose of solemnly examining and confirming the constitutions. Let us see what was the rôle from thenceforth taken by her who was the true reformer. She consulted the prioresses (as St Ignatius had when constituting his Order). She accepted or rejected their suggestions and transmitted the result of her enquiry and reflections to Father Gracian to whom the preliminary labours had been entrusted by Father de las Cuevas who was to be president of the Chapter.

St Teresa's correspondence shows up plainly and vividly the leading part she unquestionably took in the collaboration. We have read previously what she wrote with reference to the liberty of confession, after she had studied on this matter the advice of the prioress of Segovia. In the same way, she continually² points out, with reference to the smallest details, such as the shape and material for their head-dresses, and to other more important matters relative to government, the necessity to cut

¹ *Memoir on the Discalced Carmelite Nuns*, vol. i. p. 78. The references in this work are to the earliest sources.

² See *Letters*, vol. iii. pp. 78, 98, 101, 102, 174, 175.

short the vacillations of the sisters, "who were never done with their scruples." The following phrases crowd, one upon another, from her pen. "If you think well it can be declared that. . . . I have entreated them to put a clause in the constitutions to. . . . Do not forget to ordain by a formal rule. . . . There is a point I forgot to mention to you, the sisters remind me of it in their letters. . . . The Chapter must declare. . . . I have asked for. . . . Your Reverence will be good enough to add. . . . For the love of God, will you, in spite of your numerous engagements, take time to draw up all this in a simple and clear fashion. . . . Please lay down irrevocably." . . . Finally, we must not forget this last characteristic: "For the love of God, your Reverence will see to it that the beds and table linen are clean, no matter what it may cost. I could even wish they would make it an article in the constitutions, for dirt is such a terrible thing; and indeed, considering people's habits, will that be enough?"¹

Such was the spirit and such the method of those constitutions by which the great Carmelite wrought the reform of her Order.² It would be puerile in

¹ *Letters*, iii. 113.

² I do not think it is necessary to enter into further details about the fasts copied from the severity of primitive times, about the penances, the hours for prayer and recreation, the elections or the rule of manual labour, "in which we ought not to apply ourselves to anything so delicate as to take up our thoughts, and hinder us from keeping them in God," etc. I have been favoured by having a copy of these Constitutions in my hands. What makes the reading of them especially interesting is the knowledge of all we have just disclosed, which is all summed up in these very concise articles. Need we say that we read nothing there that a Catholic,

our day to attempt to dispute the honour due to her. It was she without any doubt who conceived and made the constitutions.

The Chapter of Alcalá definitely settled and confirmed them by Apostolic authority during the Lent of 1581. Their inspirer was thrilled with a joy impossible, she says, to be understood by any who had not realized the secret of all her past sufferings. Were there not attempts, after her death, to modify these constitutions more or less, and efforts to make them less inviolable and less hallowed by minimising the greatly preponderating part she had taken in them? That is a question we have no occasion to examine here: it would carry us beyond the natural limits of this study.¹

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however unlearned, would not expect to meet with? It is however conformable with the wishes of the Carmelite nuns that the text should not be given more in detail. I imagine that the reverence in which they hold their rules forbids them from exposing them to the ridicule of those for whom the severe discipline of the cloister is incomprehensible; and their humility prevents them further from exposing them to the admiration of those who would look upon their virtue as superhuman. Therefore I respect the printed warning, which is as follows: "The constitutions of a religious order are not in the province of public affairs—it might be wished that modern writers had kept to this ancient custom."

¹ On the 5th June 1590 Sixtus the Fifth yielded to the appeals of the Carmelite nuns and once more ratified the constitutions given by their Mother. But the Latin translation that he promulgated did not completely satisfy the nuns. In spite of the successive modifications that were proposed to them or imposed upon them, their general tendency especially in Belgium and France, was to revert to what they termed the pure constitutions

We know that, after having reformed the Carmelite nuns, the Saint desired to labour also to reform the Carmelite friars. She accomplished it with equal success in the end, but with much greater difficulty and through singularly severe struggles.

What was her exact part in this matter? The idea first presented itself to her mind, she then passed it on to other minds well fitted to take an active part in the endeavour, or, more correctly speaking, an outside and visible part, which she of course could not assume. She knew how to choose men of the best type, such as Saint Juan de la Cruz, and Father Gracian, both of whom she moulded to her purpose. Indeed up to the end of her life she assisted in the drawing up of the special constitutions of the Reformed Order and specially in the establishment of a separate province, which should free them from the abusive jurisdiction of the Mitigated.

When once the new Carmelites were settled in Sainte-Joseph, it was difficult to some minds to understand that the Reformed nuns were subject to friars who were not reformed (although really forming a

of St Teresa. They appropriated to themselves with joy the words of a modern historian on Saint Juan de la Cruz. "There were more safeguards in one of St Teresa's hasty drafts, written on the spur of the moment and under the stress of illness, than in all the elaborate memoranda and minute rules of the Provincials or of the Monastic Chapters. The zeal of those men is much to be feared who consider themselves capable of correcting and reforming those who reformed and founded according to the light God gave them for the purpose." I am here making use of the *Memoir* on the Carmelite nuns, which I have already quoted.

part of the same Order). If, on the one hand, the reformer probably intended, as we have seen, not to alienate her prerogative of changing the jurisdiction, she only intended to use it in conclusive and urgent cases of necessity. She knew that for the majority of postulants the union of the two groups would seem natural and expedient, something to be confidently expected, and on that very account the idea of being governed by the non-reformed friars would be a stumbling-block to some. On the other hand, there was no lack of Carmelite friars who felt the need of putting a stop to the "incalculable evils" (to use the words of one of their number), which were the outcome of the mitigation granted by Eugenius IV. If we add to all these considerations the Saint's desire to find in a fraternal Order an Apostolic function of a kind equal to perfecting the work of prayer in the conversion of souls, we shall understand how eager she was to follow up the idea with a scheme which in its turn should be succeeded by a whole body of measures intended to ensure the perfect realization of her desire.

But what shape should this reform take? That of the re-establishment among friars as well as nuns of the severity of the primitive rule, the long fastings, hard life and rude costume. . . . Father Rubeo, General of the Order, to whom she disclosed her ideas, neither discouraged her nor encouraged her much at the outset, when she spoke of it to him in Avila. But she did not let him leave Spain without writing him an urgent letter. This time he responded by an authorisation, but under the condition

that she should obtain the consent of the Provincial in charge and of his deposed predecessor. This was almost as good as promising a thing while planning at the same time to prevent its fulfilment. But the Bishop of Avila, don Alvaro de Mendoza, who was so ardently devoted to the Carmelite nuns, obtained the consent of both Provincials, to the great delight of our heroine.

She immediately began to make preparations for associating the men who were specially suitable and who were anxious to set the example. She found one in Father Antonio de Heredia, who later became Antonio de Jesus, whose judgment and intellect together could not always command her praise, but whose lofty virtue she always held in esteem. To him she added one whose wisdom and holiness she quickly appreciated, and who was destined to be San Juan de la Cruz.

In this return to the primitive severity of rule, the newly initiated, with that impetuosity and thoroughness so often found in the Spanish character, were not slow in exceeding the intentions of the reformer. She who had at one moment trembled at seeing the nuns of San José, on the occasion of the Chapter of Alcalá, demanding relaxations, which she considered extreme, in the rule of abstinence, was now obliged to recall her Carmelite friars to a better regulated balance; for on one side they were exaggerating the purely physical discipline, and on the other they seemed desirous of preserving certain customs into which some amount of pride probably entered. She taught them their lesson in terms full

of good sense, by which moreover we can measure the amount of authority she had taken. She writes, then, to Father Mariano de San Benito on the 12th December 1576:—

“That which Father Fr. Juan de Jesu saith concerning going barefoot, as if I desired it, pleaseth me much indeed, when I am one that always forbade it to Father Fr. Antonio, and he hath mistaken, if he took it for my opinion. My intention was to desire persons of good talents to be admitted, who for so great austerity might be frightened; and all that was necessary was something to distinguish themselves from the moderate Fathers. It may be that I have said that they might suffer as much cold thus, as if quite barefoot. That, that I delivered my opinion in, was to consider how unhandsomely they appear barefoot, and upon stately mules: which is not to be permitted, save for a long journey or urgent necessity; since one suits not with the other: for here have come certain young men, who, it seems, in travelling but a little way and upon some kind of beast, might as well have come on foot. And so I say again, it doth not look well, viz.: such young Discalced, and upon mules with saddles. The other hath not come into my mind, that they should go wholly barefoot; already they are only too barefoot. . . .

“That which I pressed much to him was his causing them to give them a plentiful diet; for I much think of that which your Reverence saith, and many times it afflicts me sore. . . . Know, Father, that I love a great strictness as to the

virtues, not as to rigour (corporal austerities), as may be seen by these our Houses. The reason may be because I am but a mean penitent. . . .”

Finally to secure the success of this reform and protect it from a return of the Mitigated, she saw clearly that she must bring about the establishment of the reformed Order in a separate province. She set to work heart and soul to gain this end: she pressed her scheme at Rome and at the Court of Philip II.; she strove against calumny and threats, against the blunders of her friends, against the treacherous acts of false brethren. In the end she obtained what she desired, and the success of the reform in the two branches of the Order of Mount Carmel was, thanks to her, assured.

CHAPTER VI

THE FOUNDRESS—SAN JOSÉ DE AVILA

THE real carrying into execution of this twofold reform was the establishment of the foundations. The first and most important of all was that of San José de Avila.

At the outset it might almost be said that the Saint felt everything depended on the raising of this convent. It was here that her chosen band would live, here that they would suffer, here that they would pray. . . . With the help of a wealthy friend, Doña Guiomar de Ulloa, who had been recently widowed, and had not taken the religious vow, she began the work in spite of the sorrow she felt at leaving the "cell which was after her own heart" at the Convent of the Encarnacion.

Their struggles began immediately. On the one hand the visions were redoubled wherein her Lord charged her to employ all her powers to establish this convent. He enjoined her to dedicate it to St Joseph: at the same time He predicted many crosses and troubles, but He promised her the necessary grace to bear them, and ultimate success in her enterprise. On the other side, as soon as her project had become known, reproaches, ridicule, poured upon her. The sisters of the Encarnacion

exclaimed that her inability to attain perfection in her religious life in their midst was tantamount to an insult to their convent. The most pious people in the town thought it folly to want to leave such a well-established and ancient convent to build another—after all of the same class. They enquired what means she had to do it with, deemed them absolutely inadequate and thought her persistence all the more unreasonable on that account.

There remained those whom she was bound to consult: her confessor, and those who held spiritual authority in the town. Her confessor, the Jesuit, Father Baltasar Alvarez, always inclined to reserve, and always anxious rather to restrain his penitent than to urge her forwards, did not dare to come to any decision himself on either one side or the other. He considered it more prudent to send her to her Provincial, Father Angel de Salazar.¹ She had never been in the habit of speaking to this superior² concerning her visions and the special gifts she had received. However, when she made her first overtures to him through Doña Guiomar he seemed favourably inclined to the scheme, and “promised to take the new convent under his jurisdiction.” But very soon when he learnt the public outcry and the opposition, which was growing stronger, he changed his opinion. The reformer

¹ Care must be taken not to confuse him with Father Gaspar de Salazar, the Jesuit. The latter was in Teresa's eyes “a true friend,” while with the former, to use her own words, she “never got on very well.”

² See Ribera, i. 84. Elsewhere she says as little of him as possible.

and her friend were none the less persistent in their resolutions. The scandal increased; they threatened the one with the Inquisition and to the other "they refused absolution if she would not give up her design."

She had therefore to leave the ordinary means at her disposal, for a time at all events, and to have recourse once more to divine inspiration. The Saint did not, however, so to speak, return alone. She had already received strong encouragement from two men called to a place among the Saints, Pedro de Alcántara, the reformer of the Order of St Francis, who had in the previous year made a most searching examination into Teresa's soul; and Luis Bertrand, who was then master of the Dominican novices at Valencia.¹ Their words, too, and specially those of Luis Bertrand, seemed stamped with a supernatural faith and spirit of prophecy. This was enough to allay all doubts. Nevertheless, she sought a supporter nearer home. "At the time," she says, "when they were accusing us of following nothing but our fancies, this lady (Doña Guiomar) repaired to a friar of the Order

¹ This, according to Ribera, was San Luis Bertrand's answer:—"Mother Teresa, I have received your letter, and because the matter upon which you ask me for my advice is of such great importance to the service of our Lord, I wished to recommend it to Him in my poor prayer and at the holy sacrifice; that is why I have put off sending you an answer. Now, I bid you, in the name of the same Lord, arm yourself with courage to carry out so great an enterprise. He will aid and befriend you therein, and I assure you, as from Him, that, before fifty years have passed by, your Order shall be one of the most famous in the Church of God, which keeps you in its holy protection."

of St Dominic, the most learned man then in the town," Father Ybañez. He confessed later that at first the project seemed to him foolish, but a noble folly after all, and one that ought not to be distasteful to such an Order as his own. He examined it, then, with interest; finally he pronounced that it was a risk worth running, and that they should go forward with it. At length Father B. Alvarez, who for six months had forbidden her to occupy her mind any longer with her project, was also enlightened by a double light. The rector, Denys Vasquez, who was unfavourable to the foundation, left his office and was replaced by Father Gaspar de Salazar, who was later to take such an interesting part in the life of the Saint. It did not require a long interview with him to tear down more than one imaginary veil that had been drawn between them. He gave directions to Father Alvarez not to conduct her by so narrow a path. Furthermore, soon after this Christ said to his servant: "Tell thy confessor to make his meditation to-morrow on this verse: 'Lord, how great are Thy works! and Thy thoughts are very deep.'"

Father Baltasar obeyed, and soon he felt that this very mystery was a proof of divine interposition. He wrote to his penitent telling her to devote her attention to the foundation of her convent. "I have this," says Ribera, "from a Father of the Society who is worthy of all faith, and to whom, on that very evening, Father Baltasar showed the letter which the Mother had sent him." During

these events Teresa obtained help from her earthly family, which she turned to good account. Her sister, Juana de Ahumada, with her husband, Juan de Ovalle, bought a house as though for themselves. They came to Avila on purpose to do it, and to the eyes of the public they alone appeared responsible for the purchase and the fitting. It was, however, their sister who, having permission at all times to leave the Encarnacion Convent walls, directed and pushed on the whole work. She had often the greatest difficulty to get the necessary money for paying the workmen; for, in spite of her large fortune, Doña Guiomar suddenly found herself without means. It was at this juncture that a handsome present came from Lorenzo de Cepeda from the Indies, and various other gifts from people from whom they had never been expected.

Other favours there were which gave the foundress increased strength to bear all the trials of the undertaking. One of the preachers of Santo Tomás, seeing her in the church with her sister Juana, immediately showered the most cruel allusions upon her; but visions of incomparable splendour gave her more energy than she needed to rejoice over these humiliating insults, far from suffering from them. Saint Clare appeared to her and promised her support.¹

Interventions of another nature, however, mingled with these wonders. "They had just built a great wall, as solid as could be necessary either for the

¹ The Convent of the Poor Clares, adjacent to San José, was soon to do honour to the promise of their patron Saint.

foundations or the superstructure, and it had cost a considerable sum which they had found great difficulty in making up. Well, the whole of this wall fell in a single night, although it had been built by good workmen. Juan de Ovalle, however, laid the blame on them, and wanted to force them to build it again at their own expense. But the holy Mother, calling Doña Juano, her sister, said to her: "Tell my brother-in-law not to dispute with the workmen, it is not their fault at all, it is a number of devils who have joined to throw down the wall; so let him hold his peace and give the workmen the same price for building it." But this sum had to be forthcoming. Doña Guiomar asked her mother, who lived at Toro, for thirty ducats, but greatly feared she would not obtain it, when after two or three days' time the Saint remarked to her, "My sister, rejoice, the thirty ducats are safe, they are already counted out and in the hands of the messenger we sent; the sum was given over to him in the square hall on the ground floor." Shortly after the messenger appeared, and they learnt from him that the ducats had been counted out at the hour indicated by the Mother.

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In the midst of these incidents the foundress was suddenly summoned to Toledo, on one of those calls which not infrequently occurred through her life. Luisa de la Cerda, sister of the duke of Medina-Coeli, had just lost her husband, and her grief was so great that they feared for her life. Longing for sympathy she begged the Provincial of the

Carmelites, Father Angel de Salazar, to send her Mother Teresa, whose reputation increased daily, in spite of opposition. Teresa received the summons to set out for Toledo on Christmas Eve of 1561. To this order from her superiors was added a divine command, and in this case it is certainly difficult to conjecture that what she heard was no more than the voice, swelled by imagination, of her own hopes, for this unexpected journey was most distasteful to her on various grounds. Now this was what she heard, according to her own testimony, in an ecstasy. "Daughter, neglect not to go, not listening to the motions of others, for few will advise you without temerity: though you will have troubles on your journey, I shall be greatly served therein; and it conduceth much to the business of this Convent, to absent yourself awhile, till the Breve come from Rome: for the Devil hath laid a notable snare for you against the coming of the Provincial: but fear nothing, for I will be there to help you." She set out, then, filled with hope, accompanied by Juan de Ovalle. The transition from her life as a Carmelite sister, and one who had just begun the work of reformation, to that of a palace was startling. She suffered from it much on her own account, and, as she relates, on account of her distinguished hostess too, whom she found invariably thinking more about her rank than her tastes, and whose punctilious sense of etiquette never allowed her a moment's peace. In this society, full of ideas and habits so entirely different from those of a servant of God, Teresa yet contrived

to continue her religious life, and the goodness she shed around her touched their hearts. They succeeded in catching sight of her through the keyhole when she was in her states of ecstasy, and on their conclusion were amazed to see her come out of her room, just as simple and as gracious as before. Moreover, she had little difficulty in inspiring all who came in contact with her to start a more Christian way of living. She succeeded in it all the more readily because she made there several acquaintances destined to play a part in her life.

The first was a monk whose name she does not give, but who is supposed to have formerly been her father's confessor, the Dominican Vincent Baron, and who in any case supplemented her experience concerning the virtues of mental prayer. She was from the outset drawn to convert him to a more serious practice of this exercise she loved so well. She obtained his "conversion," and soon she found herself able to write of him:¹ "Our Lord hath totally changed him, so that (as one may say) he scarce knows himself: and he hath also given him strength of body, for doing of penance, which he had not before, being very infirm. . . . His virtues are not counterfeit, our Lord having been pleased to try him by certain great mortifications, wherein he comported himself with extraordinary courage, as one that now understands the true value of the merit which is acquired by the suffering of persecutions." She herself was so much touched by this transformation which God had wrought through

¹ *Foundations*, chap. iii.

her instrumentality that "my soul, unable to sustain so great a joy, went out of herself" to receive once more in her ecstasy revelations concerning the service of God and of His Church.

A nearer neighbour of hers in the palace was a young relative of the duchess, Maria de Salazar—she who was to become that Marie de San José in whom we shall recognise before long one of the strongest, tenderest and most independent of Teresa's friends. Were many conversations and confidences exchanged between them? We do not know. Ribera, who weighs his words, tells us that the young girl was most powerfully impressed "at the sight of" the Saint. She did not, however, take a sudden resolution; she had to see the foundress a second time, seven years later, before she became one of her disciples.

The sojourn at Toledo was to be marked by one of those meetings so frequent in the lives of the Saints. In the realm of religion, as in those of science and art, the creative idea is not as a rule the exclusive prerogative of a single mind, and there has hardly been a remarkable invention to the honour of which several men of genius have not been able to lay claim.¹ Only, in the realm of sacred things, this emulation between those who appear at the hour of need for the help of men's minds never knows the passionate struggles of jealous pride. St Teresa, then, was staying with the duchess of Cerda, when a nun from Granada, hearing of her fame, travelled the seventy leagues to see her. She was called

¹ See my *Psychology of Great Men* (2nd Edition, chap. v).

Maria de Jesus. Early left a widow, she had entered the Carmelite nunnery of her town; and there in the same year and the same month as her sister of Avila, she too had had the inspiration to found a convent of reformed Carmelites. She had been tried by the same opposition and ridicule, but had been upheld by the same encouragements, amongst others that received from Father Gaspar de Salazar and Pedro d'Alcántara. She had sold all her possessions, and had made a pilgrimage to Rome totally barefooted. She arrived with bleeding feet before the Pope, who, before listening to her, exclaimed: "What does the woman want? Am I to grant all her demands?" All she asked was permission to lead a life of absolute poverty. The Sovereign Pontiff at once authorised her to found convents. She had hardly returned to Spain before she visited Toledo. Teresa, whom she had come to see, was still doubtful, not of what she wanted—she too was in love with poverty—but of what she would manage to get from her superiors and sisters. The majority of the former were hostile: several, like Father Ybañez himself, were undecided. Amongst those who supported her were, as we have seen already, Gaspar de Salazar and Pedro d'Alcántara. The persuasive power of the words of Maria de Jesus came to reinforce these encouragements, for this woman, although she could not read, had that experience of the religious life on the lessons of which her rival set such store. It was in course of conversation with Maria that Teresa's mind was struck with the observation that, if several poor

convents were noted as being a prey to a sort of restlessness which was very unfavourable to piety, it was their distraction that caused their extreme poverty, not their poverty that caused their distraction. She hesitated then no longer; and, tired of consulting with theologians, she begged them to "spare her their learning."

These two heroic women then separated, one to go and establish at Alcalá the reformed convent destined to be called the Convent of the Imagen, the other to complete the foundation of Avila, which was to be followed by sixteen others.

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Teresa was very glad to return to Avila in spite of the sadness her departure caused her hostess, and the fear she felt of finding herself elected to be prioress of the Convent of the Encarnacion. She found at Avila Pedro d'Alcántara, who employed the last days of his existence and the remains of his strength, exhausted by penance, in aiding the undertaking with the bishop, the influential people and the theologians. She also found there, on the very evening of her arrival, the Pope's brief, authorising the establishment of the convent according to the primitive rule. Finally the sudden illness of her brother-in-law, Juan de Ovalle, during his wife's absence, obtained for her permission to go and nurse him at his own house. Away from the Encarnacion she was thus able to work secretly and successfully in some of her many complicated affairs. On the day when all the essential part of the work of preparation seemed finished the invalid

regained his full health as suddenly as he had lost it; so that he himself could not refrain from saying: "Madam, it is not necessary for my illness to continue longer."

Soon after this, on the 24th August 1562, on the festival of St Bartholomew the Apostle, Gaspar Daza said the first mass on the altar of the tiny chapel of San José de Avila.¹ Pedro d'Alcántara, Father Ybañez, and Father Baltasar were there to represent the three great Orders of St Francis, St Dominic, and St Ignatius, who—in unequal proportions it is true—had all contributed to bring about the successful foundation of the new Order: they offered the Holy Sacrifice as an Act of Thanks. Let us listen to her words—she who had been Teresa de Ahumada but who from this time assumed the name of Teresa de Jesus: "I had then a foretaste of the glories of Heaven, to see our little dwelling honoured by the presence of the most Holy Sacrament, and so holy a shelter afforded to four poor orphans (for they were admitted without a dowry) and they great servants of God."

The convent thus organised was, as we know, under obedience to the bishop; but personally the foundress was still bound to the jurisdiction of her Order as a nun of the Convent of the Encarnacion. She had therefore to return temporarily to that house until she had permission from her Provincial. In this matter she was not without some tremors, which were all the keener because a kind of reaction, a natural outcome of the laws of our complex human

¹ It has been preserved, and stands close to the new chapel.

nature, which she understood so well, had already begun to assail her. Whilst action lasted and peril was imminent, she had been dauntless in her courage; on the day after her victory she found herself attacked with anxious fears and mortal sadness. All the doubts, all the earthly considerations which had failed to check her course, came back into her mind and suggested cruel doubts as to the future of her work. Was this but the result of the fatigue of a constitution which had now no longer the tension of energy and the intense desire for success to buoy it up? Or was it, as she said, the work of the Devil? In either case, she soon learned, as usual, how to derive profit from the very intensity of the trial. She had but to examine into herself, to pronounce that if this were a fresh cross, well! she had only to bear it; and from this thought came a new strength, no less quickly inured to labour than that which had preceded it.

When once she had calmed this inner tempest, everything else was a mere nothing. The news of the secretly prepared inauguration spread abroad, and the Prioress of the Encarnacion recalled her nun in hot haste to treat her as a deserter. This had no power to move her. She returned instantly, and heard in silence all the reproaches they had to make against her; then, acting under her Provincial's orders, she explained her reasons. These were so convincing that all pronounced themselves satisfied. Even the Provincial himself, from whom she had feared a more lively opposition, promised to allow her to return soon to San José. It is true tha the

added: so soon as the popular excitement should be allayed. But this excitement was just rekindled with unexpected violence.

As a general rule Spaniards, and especially the inhabitants of Avila, like convents; but precisely because they like them they busy themselves much about them, and become equally enthusiastic for some and against others. In the present case, they deemed the foundation unwarranted and suspected in it some "new idea," that is to say some pretext for the interference of the Holy Office; they also feared that as these convents were to be unendowed the expense would fall too heavily on the inhabitants of the town. Whatever the reasons, in a flash there burst forth one of those irrational tumults, in which violence increases every day, and ends by having no cause but the violence of the day before. There was endless coming and going between the Corregidor and the Provincial. The town council was summoned in feverish haste; they organised special meetings; they talked of nothing but demolishing the convent and razing it to the ground, having first taken away the Holy Sacrament. Because of four poor nuns praying and fasting there behind their walls it seemed that the enemy was concealed in the city.

Father Bañez, a Dominican friar, who appears on the scene for the first time, saw that it would be wise to temporise, and he managed to calm the storm a little; at all events he prevented them from carrying out their violent designs. But the fire soon burst forth again from its ashes. Finally the governor threatened to break in the doors if the

sisters would not open them. They replied that, as they had a rightful superior, they were awaiting his orders. This answer pacified the governor, or at any rate he thought it expedient to go to work judicially. The result was an action, legal proceedings, and appeals; finally the matter was carried to the King's Council, where Gaspar Daza and Francisco de Salcedo took upon themselves to defend the interests of the new convent.

Meanwhile Father Ybañez, whom no one expected, returned to Avila, and joined his influence to that of his brother Dominican, Father Bañez. He brought the same prudence and the same skilful management to bear on the question, and with such success that one happy morning the storm was over, no one quite knew how, and the town stayed its legal proceedings.

But what was the person chiefly interested in it doing during the six months that this great trouble lasted? She was praying and setting others to pray: she was saying to her God: "Now I can do nothing further, Lord, thou must defend thy house." When they proposed to her, as a bargain, to authorise her convent provided she would guarantee its revenues, her disquiet and apprehension began afresh. She was strengthened in her resolution and comforted afresh by several apparitions, such as that of St Pedro de Alcántara who had recently died, and by words spoken to her by our Lord during her intellectual visions. She staggered the Father Provincial by saying to him with piercing emphasis: "Beware, Father, of fighting against the

Holy Spirit." She was making preparations at the same time for her return by begging Doña Guiomar to buy her . . . some missals and a bell. In December 1562, everyone being reconciled at last, Teresa passed within the walls of the convent of San José, and there rejoined her little flock. She took with her four nuns from the Encarnacion to swell the number somewhat: they were Ana de San Juan, Ana de los Angeles, Maria Isabel, and Isabel de San Pablo, her relative. "The only outfit she took from the convent—and these she only borrowed—consisted of a straw mat, a haircloth with iron links, a scourge, and an old patched habit, for which she left an acknowledgment signed by her own hand to enable the monastery to reclaim them when it liked. And with these rich treasures did she set about to inaugurate her unrivalled work of reform."

There she passed five years, the most tranquil of her whole life. The popular hostility had turned to favour which expressed itself by pious assemblies at the festivals in the modest little chapel, and by charitable donations. "His Divine Majesty," we read in the sixth chapter of the *Foundations*, "sent us there what was necessary without asking; and if at any time we were in want (which was very seldom), the joy of these holy souls was so much greater. . . . I who was Superioress there, remember not that ever I had any care about temporal necessities; because I believed for certain that our Lord would not be wanting to His faithful brides, who were not solicitous for anything but how to please Him. And, if sometimes I had not provision

enough for all, upon my saying that those who most needed were to be relieved therewith, each one accounted herself not to be such; and so it remained untouched till God sent sufficient for all."

This privileged convent, then, knew what is so often told of in the life of the Orders of Poverty: those long but joyful fasts, those patient waitings suddenly rewarded by an unexpected present from some unknown person or the humble charity-box of rough wood, which often contained not only bread but a few "comfits" too, which were given either to the sick members or those who were the most resigned to being tended by the rest. Not content with these trials of poverty, they practised acts of mortification, the Mother taking part in them as much as the youngest and strongest of her nuns. Those acquainted with her infirm health were astonished at these mortifications. It is needless to say that this simple mode of life was relieved by the tenderness and sublime exaltation of prayerful meditation, by obedience and by the familiar cheerfulness which welcomed supernatural interventions, as well as the trials of every sort of that hard life of the cloister. In this existence, which was wholly devoted to God, external things seemed as in a dream; and the interior and spiritual things alone gave the feeling of solid reality. Between the Mother, whose humble spirit so often received—we guess it if we do not know it—visits from heavenly guests, and those guests themselves, the passage was, if one may venture so to express it, easy: the little community, henceforth protected

from serious attacks of the enemy, must have believed that the divine beings and more than one Saint verily dwelt in their abode. What pleasing pictures the Saint gives us about this existence, and the wonders enacted within these walls!

“We had a well (by report of those who had tried it) of very bad water, which I would have had conveyed in a pipe to our house, thinking that, if once it did run, it might serve us to drink; but, the well being very low, it seemed impossible to find a way to make it current: I caused workmen to be fetched that were skilled therein, to see if they could do ought; they laughed at me, that I should go about to be at charge to no purpose. I asked the Sisters what they thought of it: one (Sister Maria Bantista) answered: ‘It should be attempted. Our Lord is obliged to send us water from outside, and give us besides wherewith to feed them that bring it; now it will be less charge to His Majesty to give it us here in the house; and therefore He will not fail to do it.’ I, considering her great faith and with what resoluteness she spoke it, believed it for certain, and, contrary to the mind of the plumbers, caused it to be done, and it pleased our Lord that it succeeded so well that we got a little current of water, enough for us and very good drink, as is there to be seen.”

A spring of another character was about to open out and under the Saint's own hand: it was in the years which followed her entry into the convent of San José that she wrote first her *Life*, and after it *The Way of Perfection*. This sweet tranquillity,

which in after years she was so often to look back upon with regret, was not long permitted her without Divine monitions to trouble its peace. When she thought upon the noble qualities of her companions, it did not seem possible but that God had some other great design in store for her. She often felt like "one that had a vast treasure in his keeping, and desired that all should share therein, but had his hands tied, that he could not distribute it; so my soul seemed as it were bound up; for the favours God did me in those years were very admirable, and I reckoned them all ill bestowed on me. I strove to serve our Lord with my poor prayers and continually laboured with the Sisters, that they would do the same, and zealously endeavoured the good of souls and increase of the Holy Church." The account that she was then composing of her own life redoubled in her the strength of this conviction, that if God was giving her so many marks of His confidence it was imperative that she should repay Him by her service. From the analysis that she gives of her own state of mind and the reflections she pursues with such profoundness in her own account of herself, according to the command she had received, she passed suddenly into outbursts in which we can feel the pulsing of all her zealous impatience.

"Pardon me, O my Lord, and blame me not; for I must comfort myself with somewhat, since I serve Thee in nothing; for if really I did serve Thee in things of weight and moment, I would make no account of these nothings. O happy they, who serve

Thee in great matters! Certainly, if envying of them and desiring to do the like, might be taken by Thee for payment, I should not be far behind in pleasing Thee. But, alas! I am good for nothing, O my dearest Lord: have compassion upon me, and do Thou give us power to labour for Thy glory, since thou lovest me so much!" (*Life*, xxxiv.)

God was not very long listening to her prayers before He answered them. When the Superior General came to Spain and Avila, which was a most rare occurrence, she obtained with the concurrence of the bishop his permission to create new convents.¹ She decided to begin the work immediately. The grand series of her foundations was about to commence. This was in 1567, five years after her entry into the Convent of San José.

¹ The letters patent contained the following passage: "In virtue of our authority as General we give and grant to the Reverend Mother Teresa de Jesus, Carmelite Nun, now prioress of the Convent of San José, and living under our jurisdiction, full and entire power to make and receive, in the name of our Order, throughout the extent of the kingdom of Castille, houses, churches, building grounds, and situations for the foundation of Convents of Carmelite nuns under our immediate protection. The number of sisters in each monastery shall be twenty, with no power to increase that number. (*Gen. History*, ii. chap. iii.)

CHAPTER VII

THE FOUNDRESS—THE FOUNDATIONS CONTINUED

THE work of the foundations divides itself into three periods. From 1567 to 1571 St Teresa founded successively the convents of Medina del Campo, Malagon, Valladolid, Toledo, Pastrana, Salamanca, and Alba de Tormès. She then left off for two years, during which interval she became, against her will, prioress of the Encarnacion. She took the work up again from 1574 to 1576, to institute Segovia, Veas, Seville and Caravaca. Then she was further interrupted for four years—the period of the great war between the Discalced and the Mitigated Carmelites, and the whole of the work of reform was threatened. At length the foundations of Villanueva de la Xara, Palencia, Soria, Granada and Burgos occupied her two last years, from 1580 to 1582.

Had she a definite scheme of action? No, for the most part the foundress went hither and thither as she was called. Here it was a bishop, there a generous princess or some pious ladies, or again some honest merchants who had bound themselves by a vow, or a priest or perhaps a municipal council who sent for her. She would start forth at once, rarely having a single *maravédi* of the necessary

money. She would reach her destination and take up her quarters wherever she could and remain until the humble house was able to manage without her help.

She herself, however, took the initiative in the first house which was founded outside Avila. She knew that at a little distance north, at Medina del Campo, a town then more thickly populated, wealthier, and more learned than to-day, was a Jesuit College, with Father Baltasar Alvarez as its rector. She sent to him the Chaplain of San José, Julian de Avila, who negotiated in secret, and hired a house to start in. But at the same time she commissioned Father Antonio de Heredia, prior of the Carmelites of the monastery of Santa Ana at Medina, to buy her a house suitable for the convent proper.

In order to rent the former she needed assistance. A young woman who had not been able to enter the Convent of San José because it was full, asked to be allowed to belong to the next foundation, and brought a small sum of money to it. For the purchase of the second house there was nothing beyond the word of Father Antonio. In spite of such slight resources, and the slight encouragement she received from Avila, where many people looked upon her as foolish, and the bishop himself, her ardent admirer, contented himself with not forbidding her to leave, she set out with Julian de Avila and four nuns, two of whom were from San José and two from the Encarnacion. They travelled in very bad carriages, and endured great fatigue. In the evening

they stopped at Arevalo, where a priest came and told them they would have to return to Avila; the house hired for them stood next to an Augustinian monastery, the inmates of which did not desire to have them for neighbours: if they settled there, proceedings would be taken against them. That was not a sufficiently great obstacle to stop Teresa's way. She met besides, in Arevalo, Father Bañez, who had done her such good service in Avila, and who again offered his help. Moreover, Father Antonio sent her the assurance that she could settle immediately in the house he had bought, and that the vestibule, if they draped the walls with hangings, could be used as a chapel . . . until they found a better. She arrived, then, on the 14th August at midnight, not without some danger, as bulls were being driven into the town for the bull-fights next day. She and her companions at once went to the Convent of Santa Ana, and thence to their "house," where they had to begin immediate preparations for the next morning—for it was the feast of the Assumption.

When once inside the house they had every reason to declare that "Our Lord must have blinded the good Father de Heredia." The walls were tottering, the floors in holes, it was nothing but the ruins of a house. To hang the walls of the improvised "chapel" they had nothing but three rugs. Fortunately the old landlord had given orders to his steward to go to the rescue of the new arrivals; he offered them several curtains, and a bedcover of blue damask. With these and nails torn here and there from the old walls they adorned the vestibule, they swept it

and dressed an altar, and hung a bell to summons the faithful. In short, after some hours' work, just when the dawn was shining, they had everything in readiness for Mass: the inhabitants of Medina realised with amazement that there was another monastery in their town. They came in such numbers that the Sisters had to seek a place to retire to and listen to the divine office. They took refuge in a staircase which went up to a gallery, which by chance remained standing intact; they closed the door of this staircase and heard Mass through the chinks, and this they made into choir, reception-room and confessional in one. Thus was the Convent of San José of Medina del Campo founded. As usual, when once the work was accomplished, anxious thought of the difficulties, doubt and trouble seized hold upon the soul of the Saint. Her great fear was that some Lutheran might commit an outrage on the Holy Sacrament, which was almost exposed to the street. So she placed men as sentinels for the following night, and got up by moonlight to watch them. Soon a merchant offered her a floor of his house to live in, while the repairs she was undertaking were in progress. These repairs were made easy for her by the generosity of a noble lady, Elena de Quiroga, whose daughter was soon to become a member of the Carmel; and from that moment the success of the foundation was perfectly secure.

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Meanwhile the time for setting out again from Medina did not delay. The mother had just received

two imperative requests; one came from the brother of the bishop of Avila, Don Bernardin de Mendoza, who offered a splendid property close to Valladolid; the other from Luisa de la Cerda, who was willing to defray all the expenses, and even to guarantee the future income, of a Convent of Reformed Carmelites at Malagon.

She was bound to go, then, first to consult with the duchess at Toledo, and she crossed Madrid. There she alighted—in the little square of San Domingo—at the house of Doña Leonor de Mascareñas, Philip II.'s old governess. She was hardly settled there before the great ladies of the highest society in the capital began to besiege the palace in the hope, it would seem, either of seeing the already celebrated Carmelite in a state of ecstasy, or of obtaining from her some prophetic revelation, or even being present at a miracle. Greatly were they deceived; for with an entirely simple courtesy, perhaps mingled too with a spice of mischief, the Mother talked to them . . . of the streets of their town, their beauty and convenience, till some among the visitors were mortified, and others went away saying: "Good gracious! she is certainly a devoted nun, but there is nothing extraordinary about her." She was no less humble among the Franciscan sisters, whose Abbess was sister to the duke of Gandia, but with them she met with more shrewd foresight, for the history of the reform attributes the following wise saying to the Sisters: "Blessed be God who has given us a Saint that we can imitate! She eats and sleeps and talks like one of ourselves; she chats without

putting on any ceremonious airs, or posing as an extraordinary person."

We can well believe she was not sorry to leave the "bores" who had called upon her, when Leonor de Mascareñas took her to the Convent of Maria de Jesus¹ in Alcalá. This holy woman had all the zeal of her rival without her good judgment. Under her direction the severe discipline practised by the nuns was of such a character that most of them were worn out by it. St Teresa, who spent several weeks among them, put them back on the right road. For a moment she thought of making them leave their solitude to attach themselves to the jurisdiction of her own Order. But the archbishop of Toledo, on whom the Convent of Alcalá was dependent, did not wish them to be removed from him, and there were as yet no Discalced Carmelite friars at Alcalá. The founder then took the advice of Father Bañez, who counselled her not to be turned aside from her own personal work, and she went on to found the convent of Malagon. This was in 1568.

There arose for her a difficulty over this. The benefactress, who summoned her to found it, wanted to endow the convent, and we know what was the obstinate feeling of the stout-hearted Mother on this question. It was at this time, however, that, as we have shown further back, she gave in. The circumstances were no longer the same: the necessity for being satisfied to receive "nothing" in order to keep herself more independent in the beginning of the work no longer existed. Moreover

¹ See above, p. 141

she was not in a wealthy town, but in a poor village, where it would have been difficult to be chargeable on the inhabitants. She decided, then, to give way to the importunities of her generous friend, and of the theologians who were primed with the decrees of the Council of Trent. But she did not sacrifice her first ideas, and she herself gives us the explanation of her fresh methods of procedure thus: "I like best that our houses should either be altogether poor, or have a revenue so great, as that the nuns might not be necessitated to trouble any for what they need." She took besides every precaution she could that the individual poverty of her nuns and their spirit of mortification should not suffer by the endowment. She was destined to be amply rewarded in the future by the exceptional holiness which made this convent famous among all her foundations.

When all was settled and the treaties passed, the inhabitants of the town came to take her, with her nuns, in a grand procession on Palm Sunday. In two months' time she left the convent, after being favoured by a vision in which our Lord commanded her to go on with her foundations, and to accept all the disciples that were offered her: she was to adopt the same methods as at Malagon in the small towns, and to place all her convents under the control of one head, and finally she herself was to write the history of her foundations.¹

Valladolid was waiting for her, and she had a reason for hastening there, for the benefactor, Don

¹ *Life*, Additions.

Bernardin de Mendoza, had died suddenly, and she saw him in purgatory, there to suffer cruel torments until the first Mass should be celebrated in the convent which was to owe its existence to his liberality.

The domain he had offered at some distance from the town, and of which possession was taken on the 15th August 1568, was very pleasantly situated, but it was unhealthy. Teresa realised this at a first glance, and experience almost immediately showed her that she was right, for most of the nuns fell ill. Then the sister of the bishop of Avila, Doña Maria de Mendoza, offered to exchange this property for a more suitable house; in the meanwhile she kept them in her own place, and bore all the costs of the removal. It was during this sojourn that, being free from the rules of enclosure, she was able to keep Juan de la Cruz near her for some time, to complete his initiation into the spirit and methods of the true Carmel, and thus to prepare a way for the reformation of the Carmelite Friars. They took possession of the new convent on the 3rd February in the following year. There was a solemn procession; the bishop of Avila, who desired to be present at the ceremony, presided over it, accompanied by all the clergy and the religious Orders. All the nobility and gentle-people and all the leading inhabitants of the town, with the people behind them, advanced, through the hangings, the illuminations and the incense. The humblest member in the company was she who was already looked upon by all as a Saint, and as possessing the greatest influence with God.

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A very short time had been enough for Teresa to establish in this new house a state of perfection extolled by all the historians of the Order. She was receiving calls to Toledo, but before she went there she found means to found at Durvelo the first monastery of the Discalced Friars.

True, she had not to erect great buildings, nor arrange a large number of inmates. Father Antonio, who had been content with so little on her behalf at Medina del Campo, little Father Juan de la Cruz, whose first habit she herself had first cut out and made, and one lay brother—those were all she had. A gentleman had lately offered her for their use a house in a hamlet containing about a score of houses; it consisted of a porch, one room, an attic, and a tiny kitchen: the whole so dirty that even to the friend par excellence of mortification and poverty it was impossible to sleep there. But we need not fancy that the descendant of the Ahumadas would be discouraged by such a difficulty as that. “After some minutes of inspection I settled the matter thus: I considered that of the portus or hall might be made a church, of the garret a choir, of the chamber a dormitory. . . . My companion, though much better than I and a great lover of penance, could not endure I should think of making a convent here, and therefore said to me: ‘Certainly, Mother, there is no spirit (though never so good) that is able to endure it: speak no more of it, I beseech you.’ Father Julian, who came along with me, though of the same opinion with my companion,

when I told him my design, did not contradict me. We went to pass that night in the church; though it must be agreed that by reason of our extreme weariness we needed rather to sleep than to watch."

She adds, it is true: "If I spake with so much boldness it was because, methinks, I beheld it as then truly present, what our Lord hath since done, and accounted then as certain (as I may so say) all that I now see; yea, and a great deal more, than I have seen; since yet at the time I am writing this, there are found erected through the bounty of our Lord no less than ten convents of Discalceates."

The eagerness of the two friars was just as great. Father Antonio swept the whole place energetically, and he collected some alms the produce of which he soon brought to the Mother. Let us listen to this: "Indeed, it was mean enough; only he was well stored with hour-glasses, whereof he brought five with him: which made me laugh heartily. He told me that, for the exact measuring of their hours he was not willing to go unprovided. For the rest, he was so poor, I suppose he had as yet no place to sleep in." They lived, however, for several years at Durvelo and did good service there; for the surrounding country was in need of spiritual help, which was one of the reasons for their accepting the mean abode. They went out to teach the catechism, and took their one and only meal in the evening. They left this place later to settle at Mancera, and afterwards at Avila, on the exact spot of St Teresa's parental home.

Durvelo once established in the way we have just described, Teresa went forward to Toledo.

The Jesuit Father Pablo Hernandez, whom she had known there during her stay before the foundation of Malagon, had persuaded a rich merchant to defray the expenses of a Carmelite convent. This man, Martin Ramirez by name, died almost immediately after, it is true; but he left a brother who inherited his ideas as well as his wealth, who seemed quite disposed to carry out the project. The Mother arrived, then, with two of her companions whom she had chosen from San José of Avila, and all three stayed at the house of Doña Luisa de la Cerda. It was the vigil of the Annunciation in 1569. In spite of these encouraging beginnings, difficulties were not slow to crop up, as much from the administration of the diocese¹ (the episcopal chair was vacant) as from Ramirez, who was influenced against them by a son-in-law. To add to the annoyance they could not find a single house in all Toledo.

Tired of two months' waiting, Teresa decided to plead her cause herself. She sent to beg the governor to come and listen to her in a church: she talked to him as she well knew how to talk, and she convinced him. After this she considered, she tells us, that the foundation was practically laid. However, what had she to do it with? Four ducats with which she immediately purchased two

¹ Besides being under the jurisdiction of the Order, each convent had to obtain the authorisation of the bishop of the diocese, in conformity with the prescriptions of the Council of Trent.

pictures to place above the prospective altar, two mattresses, and a blanket for her own bed and that of two Sisters. But she still had not a house.

Just then, a Franciscan, Father Martin de la Cruz, who was passing through Toledo, placed a young man named Andrada at her disposal. Not only was this youth very poor, but without giving us any more elaborate description of his personal appearance, the Saint tells us that one of her companions burst out laughing when she saw him, while the other asked if they would not get themselves into difficulties by having him. "What harm then do you think they can think of us, who are like poor pilgrims?" the foundress answered them. Nevertheless she admits in her account of the foundations that: "The worthy Andrada's garb was not fit for conversing with Discalced Nuns."

But not only did the "worthy Andrada" at once find them a house which was for sale, very suitable for their purpose, and into which he naïvely entreated them to be quick and carry "their furniture,"¹ but he brought some workmen and worked himself at the preparations with quite as much enthusiasm as the nuns themselves. Various difficulties with the neighbours, again calculated to amuse those who went through them, were allayed by degrees. The question remaining was, how were they to live? It might well seem difficult, considering that they had nothing, or hardly any-

¹ "That, my good Andrada, will not take long," was the prompt answer he received.

thing, to live on. One day when they wanted to cook a sardine, a most unexpected and anonymous present of a small bundle of wood was sent them. One night when their beloved Mother was suffering from the cold, and asked them to do what they could for her, they were obliged to remind her laughingly that she had over her "all" the coverings of the house. All three companions bravely made the best of these hardships; they were no more anxious to reveal them to their rich patroness, than she, it would seem, was thoughtful to find them out for herself. When Alonso Ramirez returned to his better senses, and some other people of means provided them with more than they needed, they looked back regretfully on the happy time of their absolute poverty.

Although this foundation took place soon after the others, it nevertheless makes an important date in the history of New Carmel. It was from this time that St Teresa, seeing with gladness the progress made by her growing houses, resolved to supply from henceforward the work of reformation from the reform itself, and not to ask for any more nuns from the Convent of the Encarnacion. It was at the Toledo monastery, too, while present at the dying moments of one of her daughters, that she saw the Divine Master at the head of the bed. "His arms were somewhat open, as one who stood protecting her, and He bade me: Be confident: all the nuns that should die in these monasteries He would so defend; and that they should not fear any temptation at the hour of death."

In such a manner was this astonishing existence conducted, and these souls, accustomed to the mingling of suffering and joy, were as simple-minded in the face of the most extraordinary favours of divine working, as before the commonest hardships of daily life.

On the vigil of the following Pentecost, in this same year, 1569, when the foundress joyfully proposed to take a little rest, she was called to see the Princess d' Eboli, wife of Don Ruy Gomez de Silva. There was a question of starting a foundation at Pastrana. As the prince was willing to place his great influence at the service of the reformed Order, she had to resign herself and go. A heavenly vision decided her to do so, by forewarning her of quite another outcome than that which she had foreseen.

The Carmelite convent about which she set out was indeed established; but of all those she had founded, it was the only one which did not last. The patroness, becoming a widow, intended to be admitted; but at the same time she desired to interpret the rules according to her own ideas, and to make them bend to her convenience. This soon resulted in a state of things so little conducive to "the peace needed in a religious life," that the Carmelites decided to give up what they had received from it, and the convent was suppressed.

On the other hand, it was during this journey that the Mother had the consolation of procuring the entry into the Order of Discalced Carmelite friars, of two Neapolitans, Brother Juan de la Miseria¹ and Father Ambrosio de Mariano; this

¹ The painter of her portrait.

latter was of illustrious descent, once the intended husband of the Queen of Poland, whilom commander of the Knights of Malta, and one of the heroes of the battle of St Quentin. Both had tried to find rest in free hermitages, which the decrees of the Council of Trent suggested to them to leave, in order to join a regular Order; they were asking themselves which Order they should join, when the reformer of the Carmelites herself happily intervened to settle their indecision. These two men proved to be the two chief pillars of the second monastery of Discalced Carmelites which she established at Pastrana. In the course of the struggles that are at hand, both will hold privileged positions by her side.

She had been back at Toledo some months and was employing her time in installing her daughters in a house which had been recently bought for them, when she received from a Jesuit, who was a friend of Fathers Baltasar Alvarez and Saurez, a request to go and found a convent in the town of Salamanca. His name was Father Guttierrez, and he was rector of the College of Salamanca. They promised her such a good reception that she at once considered the thing as good as done. Accompanied this time by one nun only,¹ she reached Salamanca on All Saints' Eve in 1570. They had taken for her a house which had been shared in common by some scholars, who, the Saint said, "little regarded cleanliness and neatness." The

¹ Among those who were to arrive some days later was the famous Ana de Jesus, who died at the Carmel in Brussels in 1621.

house was in such a condition "as cost no small trouble that night to clean it." It was here that there happened one of the incidents which she relates in such a familiar way in her *Foundations*.¹

"I and my companion stayed in our new convent alone on All Saints' Eve. I tell you, sisters, when I remember the fear of my companion, which was Maria de Sacramento, a nun elder than I, and a great servant of God, I have a good mind to laugh. . . . The scholars could not be put out of her mind; for she thought because they were so unwilling to leave the house, some of them might be hid in it. . . . We shut ourselves up in a room, where there was straw, which was the first kind of furniture I provided when I founded monasteries; for having this I reckoned I had beds. But I must return to the Mother Maria del Sacramento. When she saw herself inclosed in that room, she seemed somewhat better satisfied concerning the scholars; yet she did nothing but look, one while on this side, another while on that, with great fear. . . . I asked her what she looked at so, since none could come

¹ Chap. xxiii.—This house, on which is the inscription: *Casa di Santa Teresa*, is to be seen and visited to this day. It is occupied by Sisters, called Servants of St Joseph, who keep a small infants' school there. The building is exactly (or very nearly) what it must have been in 1570. The huge stones arranged fanwise in the arch of the doorway, the rude colonnade which supports the front of the structure within and runs round part of the garden, the walls—on all the date is written clearly. The Saint's room—much bigger than an ordinary cell—has been made into an oratory. The wooden staircase and the hall are hung with pictures representing the principal episodes in the history of the modest foundation.

thither? She answered: 'I am thinking, if I should now die here, what would your Reverence do alone?' Indeed if such a thing should have happened, it would have seemed to me a hard case. So she made me stand musing awhile hereupon, and likewise a little afraid; for dead bodies, though I fear them not, always cause a pain at my heart, even when I am not present there. And the general ringing of bells then furthered it, for, as I have said, it was the night before All Souls' Day.¹ However, after a little reflection, I answered my companion: 'Sister, when this happens, then I will consider what I am to do: at present let me sleep.' So, having had two bad nights, sleep soon expelled our fears. Next day came other nuns, whereupon our fears utterly vanished."

The Carmelites did not long remain at that house, nor in the one which was inaugurated there three years later ² (28th September 1573).

¹ A day had passed since the experiences recorded on the previous page. —TRANS.

² And of which all recollection is lost; so the Carmelite friars of Salamanca inform me. The house the nuns now live in is a third. This last move, however, was marked by one of those events the pious recollection of which the Order has cherished. The venerable Ana de Jesus, an eye-witness, relates it as follows in her deposition for the process of canonization:—

"It was eight o'clock at night: we had to dress three altars, and the rain continued to pour into the church. Not knowing what to do, I went with two other nuns to find the Saint, who was with Julian de Avila and the licentiate Nieto, chaplain of our convent of Alba, and I said to her with the utmost confidence: "*You know what time it is, and how much we have still to do. So please pray to God that the rain shall stop.*"—"Pray

From Salamanca to Alba de Tormes the distance is short,¹ and it was quickly accomplished about the beginning of 1571. A serious-minded married pair, Francisco Velasquez and Teresa de Laiz, who had successively lived in Alba and Salamanca, and then again at Alba, were childless, and wished to devote their fortune to some religious purpose. Longings, visions, scruples, extraordinary happenings, which are described at length in the *Foundations*, and which had awakened them to a stricter execution of their promise, led them finally to demand a Carmelite convent. Their request was addressed through the medium of Juana de Ahumada and Juan de Ovalle. Both too were to become benefactors to this house and by more gifts than one: they gave their daughter Beatriz to it, and they left it all their wealth. Their bodies too lie at rest there with those of their children and that of the Saint; since it was there, as we shall soon see, that she died and had her final burying-place.

to *Him yourself*,' she answered, a little put out at my having no trust but in those prayers of hers, '*pray to Him, since it is so urgent, and since you fancy God will grant my request on the spot.*'

"I withdrew at once; but I had hardly come into the next court when I saw the sky full of stars and so clear that no one could have imagined it had rained for a long time. Emboldened by so unexpected a change, I went back to the Saint, and took the liberty of saying to her: '*It has stopped raining; but your Reverence might just as well have asked God for this change of weather a little earlier.*' The Saint's only answer to this speech was a kind and gracious smile." (Manrique, *Life of the Venerable Ana de Jesus*, Book I. chapter viii.)

¹ Nowadays it is an hour's railway journey.

After the inauguration, which took place on the Feast of the Conversion of St Paul, 1571, two years passed by without any fresh foundation being undertaken. Perhaps the Mother wished to recover somewhat from her fatigues, and certainly she must have needed rest. She was tormented by more than one disease, the worst of which was a frequent heart-trouble, treated by the doctors with strong medicines and constant bleedings; yet she went on travelling through all weathers, tropical rains or intense cold or extreme heat, sleeping, as we have seen, on straw, and taking her leading part in the toils of settlement, whatever they might have been. Sometimes she travelled on horseback, or rather on a mule; for in one of her letters¹ she apologises for having borrowed a saddle. . . . But more often she drove in carriages with her daughters. Not that she found this method of travelling easier—far from it! But she could at all events cover over the carriages

¹ To Luisa de la Cerda, 27th May 1568.—I may be permitted to say that, during the spring of 1901, I saw, sitting on her mule on the fine old bridge of Alba de Tormes, a lady whose dignified attitude no less than the beauty of her features, proclaimed her a true descendant of St Teresa's contemporaries. Her neck and shoulders, too, were so thickly veiled, after the Castilian fashion, that I was forced to admit that indeed it was easier for Spanish ladies than for any others to adopt the dress of the Carmelites. In other ways, too, the little town of Alba de Tormes had preserved a strong flavour of the antique in its ways. I noticed there one sure sign of a more or less backward civilisation—the men better groomed and dressed than the women. At the little railway station, close to the women who were scarcely visible under their inevitable black shawls, were two men in breeches, with big silver buttons on their waistcoats . . . and gold brooches at their throats.

from one end to the other, and transform them into little nunneries. On this let us hear Father Ribera, the eye-witness of the last two years of her life, who gives a vivid and charming account of her manner of travelling.

“She only took with her those who showed the greatest disposition to follow her, unless some special necessity obliged her to do otherwise, and she shewed them the pleasure she felt in their good nature by her humble and gracious words. On the day of departure they all communicated, for the Saint made a special point of beginning the journey with that. To be more private and out of public sight, she always liked to go in a stage-coach or litter in as good style as they could get, so that on the roads and in the inns her nuns should not be taken for people of little importance, and then no one would dare to address them rudely as people are apt to speak to poor women whom they see to be poor and unimportant;¹ that was why she wished they should pass outwardly for ladies of rank. When they could get neither coach nor litter, they obtained well-covered-in carriages. As soon as they had started, their way of proceeding was the same as though they were in the convent. If one of them forgot to lower her veil whenever she could be seen by any passers by the Mother reprimanded her severely: she herself set the example in this matter;

¹ When she, personally, was mistaken for such a woman, she bore it with gladness, as we shall see from several instances. But the care she took to protect her daughters from these accidents was still more praiseworthy.

for even in talking to a woman, she lowered her veil, at all events unless the nature of the woman she was addressing gave her some good motive for raising it. They always carried a bell with them, which they rang for prayers and the hours of silence, as in the convent, and they had an hour-glass to tell the time by. When the bell had given the signal, all who were with the Mother, and her daughters, nuns, priests, laymen and even the servants were expected to keep silence, and they profited by it. When the bell rang to say the silence was at an end, it was a curious sight to see the alacrity of the servants, and how glad they were to be able to talk again. When they had been very careful in maintaining the silence, the Saint rewarded them by giving them something extra at their next meal. In the litters or carriages where she could not be with the nuns, she appointed one whom the others had to obey as if it were herself. She did this not only to practise them in obedience, but also so that she might find out what gift of ruling the one she had appointed was possessed of. When they reached an inn, she took a set of rooms for herself and daughters in which they shut themselves up; she set apart one as portress who alone held communication with the people of the house, and asked and received all that they wanted. If the inn or the house where they had to stop was too poor to yield them separate rooms, she had sheets spread out in such a way that the nuns could occupy one part of the room in privacy, and there they brought them all they wanted. In the morning, the Mother was the first to get up, and she woke the others; at

night, she was the last to go to bed. The little colony always took a priest with it to hear their confessions and say mass to them. The day began with the oblation of the Holy Sacrifice, as often as the priest could offer it; the Mother never failed to take the communion on these occasions.

“She took with her holy water, and sometimes an image of the Child Jesus, which she carried in her arms. In this way the journey caused her no distraction, for it was all the same to her whether she was on the road or in a monastery, attending to business matters or at prayer, in the midst of work or at rest. What am I saying? Whilst she was travelling, God was pleased to flood her soul with so many blessings and spiritual emotions that, to bear them in such abundance, she was obliged to look for some distraction in the difficulties and discomforts which overtook them by day and night. She was constantly in a state of profound meditation, and so walked in God’s presence that she scarcely ever lost sight of Him. This exercise of the presence of God was very different from what devout persons usually practise; with her it was of a peculiar and very lofty character; she held the Divine Persons of the Trinity in the very core of her soul, she realised Their presence in a marvellous manner, and felt herself always in Their company. And so there was never a moment’s solitude for her; she would have liked never to have to speak with others, so that she might enjoy in the depths of her soul that lovely and divine companionship; nevertheless when duty obliged her to speak, she did it with such eagerness, one would

have said she was very ready to do so; and this she did to comfort those who were in her company. They were so delighted to travel with her, that they counted the fatigues but nothing, and could never satisfy themselves with listening to her sweet and gracious words; she indeed breathed peace and heavenly gaiety all around her. From the incidents of the journey, as from the things that they saw, she drew admirable subjects for conversation about God; and charmed and fascinated everyone in her party by her talk. Amongst the mule drivers there were some who were in the habit of swearing and taking liberties, but they abstained from these things out of respect for the Mother, and found more happiness in listening than in tasting any pleasure they could have obtained on earth—they themselves have declared this more than once."

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The suspension of the foundations was not, however, to mean a time of repose for her: nothing of the kind indeed! Very unexpected tidings were communicated to her. The Apostolic Visitor, the Dominican Father Pedro Hernandez, had appointed her prioress of the convent of the Encarnacion without consulting the nuns, and entirely on his own authority. The convent was undergoing a very grave crisis both temporal and spiritual. It was in the saddest state of destitution, and in view of the large number of Sisters—which always exceeded a hundred and fifty—it was on the point of sending many of them back to their families. This led no doubt to recrimination and reciprocal complaints;

in short there was such a commotion that Mother Teresa was the only person to be found of sufficient power to re-establish order and peace.

This was a grievous blow to her, and she questioned within herself whether she ought, by accepting this charge, to abandon so soon the convents that she had with so much trouble but recently established. A vision, the account of which she has given us in a paper written by her own hand,¹ put to flight all her hesitations.

“One day, after the octave of the Visitation, when I had withdrawn into a hermitage of the Carmelites, I earnestly recommended one of my brothers to the Divine Master; I ventured to say to Him: ‘Lord, why must my brother, who is so dear to me, be in a place where his salvation is in danger? If I saw one of Thy brothers in a similar peril, what would I not do to deliver him from it? It seems to me I should try every means within my power.’ He then said to me: ‘O my daughter, my daughter! the nuns of the Encarnacion are My sisters, and thou art still wavering whether to go to them or not! Be of good courage, bear in mind that thou goest to fulfil My will, and the difficulties are not so great as thou imaginest. And what thou thinkest may injure thy new houses will tend as much to their advantage as to that of thy old convent. Resist no longer, and remember that my power is great.’” She obeyed, therefore, and went to the Encarnacion; but at the same time she did not give up the reform. Far indeed from disavowing

¹ Ribera, III. chapter i.

it, she solemnly took her vow of allegiance and was nominated by her superiors a nun of the monastery of Salamanca. Then she arrived to be installed in her office as prioress by the Provincial. Their arrival together was received by a violent uproar. Annoyed that they had not been consulted in the matter, and fearing that they might be compelled to relinquish the mitigated rule, the Sisters heaped upon one and both cries, entreaties, and even insults. Whilst some who were more submissive or more virtuous, desired to receive the new prioress in procession with the Cross at their head, to the chanting of the *Te Deum*, some screamed, some fainted. At last the Mother secured the first step towards quiet by declaring that she was only there herself out of obedience, and she spoke some words which are well worth repeating exactly, because they so precisely bear out all that we know of her from other sources.

“Ladies, my mothers and my sisters, our Lord has sent me by the voice of obedience to this house, to fill here an office of which I was far from thinking, and of which I was most unworthy.

“That the choice fell on me caused me deep grief, not only because a charge is confided to me, which I shall not know how to fill, but also because you have been deprived of the liberty of acting for yourselves in your elections, and have been given a prioress against your wishes and your inclination; now, this prioress is such an one that it would be hard for her to succeed in imitating the virtues of the very lowest among you.

"I come solely to serve you, and to encircle you with as much anxious care as shall be in my power. . . . I am a daughter of this house and your sister. I know the character and needs of everyone, or at least of most amongst you; you cannot then put a distance between you and one who is so closely allied to you.

"Do not, therefore, fear my control; although I have lived in the midst of Discalced Carmelites and exercised authority over them, by God's mercy I know how to rule those who are not of their number. . . ." ¹

This speech could not but win over those who were the least rebellious among them, and another most tactful attention achieved the peace. One day when they came to the choir, most of them stiff and icy cold in attitude, they saw the prioress's stall occupied by a statue of the Holy Virgin, holding the convent keys in her hands; at her feet was a little footstool, which was all that she, who seemed to hold herself but sub-prioress, had reserved for herself. The Mother was quick to perceive the effects of this mute act of diplomacy. "*My prioress,*" she wrote (the Holy Virgin!) "*works miracles.*" The Encarnacion became and remained as earnest a convent as those of the Discalced nuns. The rule imposed upon it deserved moreover to be blessed in all respects. If too frequent callers were rigorously forbidden to the extent of producing the strong displeasure of some gentlemen, the "temporal state" was improved, and the great mystic who had

¹ Reproduced in the edition of her *Letters*, iii. p. 398.

re-established peace in their souls was also capable of putting in order the modest finances of the community.

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In 1574, when the three years of her priorate were not yet finished, she heard during her prayers the voice of our Lord saying to her: "Go and found a convent at Segovia." At first the thing seemed impossible; but having in great trepidation asked for leave, she was surprised to find it granted at once; further than this, a rich widow of Segovia was bearing the expense of the foundation, to which she and her daughter desired to retire.

The beginning, however, was rather stormy. The bishop had given his permission in due course, but the vicar-general, who was ruling the diocese during his absence, pretended to be unaware of this, when he saw, to his great displeasure, that without notifying the fact to him, they had opened the new Sanctuary, and that Juan de la Cruz had said the first Mass there. He tried, therefore, to close the house. In time the storm abated and the Mother was able to instal her nuns; she had selected those who, from the reasons we have already seen, had had to leave the Convent of Pastrana.¹ When this was done she left, first having seen a vision in the chapel of the Dominicans of that town. She saw St Dominic, who had done memorable penances in that place, and he conversed with her and promised to help her in the interest of her Order. She returned to the Encarnacion afterwards to retire from

¹ See above, pp. 165-6.

her office, and entered her beloved monastery of San José.

Very soon she had to take up a plan which had been suggested to her at Salamanca, and which for want of certain permissions had remained in abeyance. It concerned the founding of a monastery at Veas, between the provinces of Jaen and Murcia. The idea was in the first instance due to that Catalina de Sandoval, one of the most remarkable of the young Spanish women who crossed St Teresa's path.¹ She had been kept back by the objection of her parents for a long while and then by a terrible illness which ended in a miraculous cure; but at last she and one of her sisters saw the realisation of her vows. Upon her earnest entreaty, Philip II. removed all the objections (which had come from the commandery of the Order of St James) and the two sisters could devote themselves to the construction of the monastery.

They had sent for St Teresa, and she came on St Matthew's day, 1575. Noblemen of Veas met her on horseback to escort her carriages to the town: an immense crowd awaited her; the clergy were in their canonicals, the people, with the cross at their head, led her in procession to the house which was destined for the new community. There Catalina de Sandoval, who saw the Carmelites and their Mother for the first time, recognised the faces which she had seen in a vision.

As for the foundress, the greatest of all the joys in store for her at Veas was meeting with Father

¹ See above, p. 13.

Geronimo Gracian de la Madre de Dios. He was one of the numerous children of one of the greatest men in Spain. After taking his degrees at the University of Alcalá, he for a time thought of entering the Order of Jesuits; and finally decided on the Discalced Carmelites. St Teresa had already interchanged several letters with him, but she had never seen him. She had scarcely talked to him a few minutes before she "blessed God for such a great privilege"; for she adds, "if I had been free to choose and to ask the Divine Master for someone to put everything in order in our growing reformation, I could never have asked anyone better than him whom He has pleased to grant us." "Never," she goes on to say, "have I seen so great perfectness united to such gentleness," and in her letters she is never tired of praising this youth of high birth, of matchless intellect, who was an admirable preacher, of a spirit ready to face all trials—"complete," in fact, and ripe before his age.¹

This meeting, then, of a woman of sixty with a young monk of scarcely thirty years was one of the most prominent events in the lives of both of them. The reform of the friars of Carmel still appeared to the foundress to contain unmistakable signs of weakness, and even of prompt decay. They were always under submission to the Mitigated Order, which only did its best to exterminate them; they had no acknowledged constitutions; in the different monasteries they conducted things as they judged expedient to themselves, and there was no uni-

¹ See *Letters*, i. pp. 172, 174.

formity of opinion among them: finally, Juan de la Cruz, who had already done so much honour to the Order, seemed to her unquestionably more fitted for prayer and for a confessor and author, than for a ruler. It was then high time that such a man as Father Gracian, as indeed was done, should be entrusted with the general management of both friars and nuns of the Reformed Carmelites.

In the meantime she learned with pleasure that being the Apostolic Visitor of the whole Order in Andalusia, he was in the position of her superior at Veas. So in spite of the small liking, let us rather say, the repulsion which this daughter of Old Castille felt for Andalusia and the Andalusians,¹ she allowed herself with less difficulty to be persuaded by him to go and make a foundation in Seville, where he had just preached through Lent with the greatest success.

She had then in view, it is true, two other foundations besides, one at Caravaca and the other at Madrid. But the first was to be delayed yet a while by some formalities; and the other was put off by events out of which historians have not failed to make great capital.

The Saint believed she had been summoned to found a house at Madrid, by one of her revelations. She told the Father of it, and had added that, in spite of everything, she would shape her course according to the advice he should give her; she

¹ For if she had so much as known, she says, that Veas, though not a town of Andalusia, was still dependent on that province in matters ecclesiastical, she would never have gone there.

explained her state of mind in the following way. "I could not be mistaken in obeying my superior, and I could be in judging the reliability of a revelation."¹ Soon after, moreover, Jesus Himself had notified His approval of her obedience and had bidden her "Go to Seville: the foundation shall be made, although you will have to go through much suffering first."

She suffered at once and severely, during the journey. The heat was terrible and the inns uninhabitable, and so bad that in spite of a sharp attack of fever she preferred to walk in the full sun rather than stay in such a bed as that with which she had been obliged; her passage across the Guadalquivir was made on a boat which was carried away by the waves and brought her within an inch of losing her life; she lost her way more than once in the night; nothing was wanting to complete her troubles. To physical suffering were added trials of a less serious character, or so we should judge them, but that she put them among the "rudest mortifications of her lifetime." It was the eve of Pentecost, 1575: as they neared Cordova, she and her daughters desired to hear Mass in a hermitage some distance from the town, so as to avoid the crowd. But as the little Church was dedicated to the Holy Spirit there were a number of people assisting in the celebration of the festival by processions, and sermons and—what was more unexpected—by dancing. When the people saw the Carmelite nuns with their white mantles and lowered

¹ Yépès, ii. 23, and *General History*, iii.

veils, they rushed to look at them . . . we might say as if they were strange animals, for the Saint says in plain words: "The curiosity and excitement of all these folk could not have been greater if they had been looking at the arrival of bulls intended for the sports."

However, she reached Seville. Father Gracian had assured her of a warm reception, particularly from the Archbishop. The latter was indeed pleased to see them; but—they could not agree about even very important details—he absolutely refused to have an unendowed convent. Now the Mother judged that in such a large town as Seville they ought to be able to live by public charity, without an assured income. Moreover, when she entered the capital of Andalusia all her means consisted of one small coin called *blanca* and the coverings on the carriages. The Archbishop gave way finally, for whoever had listened to the Saint found himself induced to do what she wanted, willingly or not.

But it seems he knew his episcopal town better than did the Carmelite nuns from Castille. Nowhere else, Ribera tells us, were they left so forsaken or deprived of help. No one dared to be answerable for them. They had no beds at all to sleep on in the temporary house which had been obtained for them. The neighbours had lent them, on arrival, some rush-matting and a few dishes, but had quickly recalled them. Sometimes they had nothing to eat; one day they had to search all through the house to find some bits of rope to light a fire to cook themselves some eggs. The young ladies who had so earnestly entreated Father Gracian to found the convent and had

promised to enter it themselves, lost courage on a near view of the severity of the rules of the Order. One novice came to them, however, but only to submit them to worse trials than all they had gone through before; for she soon left them to spread the most abominable calumnies against them: she denounced them to the Inquisition as being of those heretics who styled themselves "Illuminate," and accused them of hanging up girls by the feet to beat them with rods; in fact she made out they were mad. . . . We can spare ourselves the rest. . . .

Must it be believed that that climate which tends so much to the proverbial enervation and sensuous nature of its inhabitants and of which she had had a kind of instinctive mistrust, had affected even our heroine herself? Why should we not credit it since she wrote with her usual keen-sighted penetration: "One would not think that in a City so large as Seville, and a people so wealthy, I should have had less furtherance and means for founding than in all other Towns, and places, I came in; yet I was so far discommodated there, that I sometimes thought, it was not fit for us to have a Monastery in that City. I know not whether this be not the same Climate or no, which I have heard tell of, where the Devils by God's permission have more power to tempt: for here they assaulted me so furiously that in all my life I never seemed so pusillanimous, and cowardly, as I did here. They had taken away my energy,¹ so that

¹ A little later, she writes that scarcely had she reached Toledo (after having left Andalusia) when she felt "the same courage as before."

I did not know whether I were myself: though the confidence I used to have in our Lord did not leave me: but my nature was much altered from what it was ordinary."

The kindness of a Carthusian nun placed them out of reach of absolute want. Then, in this foundation—which cost her more trouble than any except the foundation of San José—God permitted her earthly family should render her even more signal service than it had done even at Avila. Don Lorenzo had just returned from the Indies, and he at once placed a large sum of money at his sister's disposal; he watched over the works himself, and provided for the needs of the Sisters, and without question he managed their affairs well. It was a new comfort to her who always loved her own family deeply, even when her sublime vocation urged her to seek after solitude. Lorenzo also confided his little daughter Teresita to her care, who was scarcely seven years old, and fascinated the convent with her innocent quaint ways, her angelic sweetness of disposition, and her love for her aunt. "We ought always," said the Saint, "to have a little one of this age among us."

Finally matters progressed better and better; when there was no longer anything wanted from anybody, everybody began to offer help. An ecclesiastic in the town undertook to decorate the chapel in which the first Mass was to be celebrated, and to arrange everything to attract the sympathies of a population which always liked outward show and demonstration. Thanks to his services nothing was wanting: the walls were adorned, there were hangings

of yellow and crimson taffeta, singing and music, crowds of people, a procession, a fountain of scented water in the chancel of the chapel, and outside *firing of guns!* and fireworks, which would have set the chapel on fire, without a kind of miraculous act of protection. This feria went on till night-fall. In short, everybody exclaimed that they had never seen such a display in Seville. "Ye see here, Daughters," the Mother concludes, "the poor Discalceates now honoured by all people; and yet a little before, it seemed, they could not so much as get a little Water to drink, though the River there hath great store."¹

In spite of the recollection of this boisterous festival—of which she never speaks without a little sting of irony—the founder cannot help repeating in one of her letters that: "the people here do not please me at all; I do not get on well with the natives of this part of the country." It was in vain she felt her health returning, thanks to the climate and to the rest they allowed her to take; for the Andalusians did not make nearly so much of her as the Castilians, nor overwhelm her with demands for advice and prayers. In vain was she pleased at installing her daughters in a pretty house bought cheaply where the *patio* seemed made of "*alcoza*,"² where they did not suffer from the heat, where—and this she appreciated most of all—the garden was very pleasant, and the view delightful. In vain did she enjoy the society of Maria de San José, whom she

¹ She knew that with good reason, since she had nearly been drowned in it.

² A white paste which confectioners make of flour and sugar.

was going to make prioress, and saw the back-biting novice replaced by a spiritual daughter of Father Gracian's, Beatriz de la Madre de Dios, who was destined to become one of the best nuns of the reform! Nothing of all this could prevent her from sighing after Castille as after "the promised land." After all, she declares, the most precious remembrance that she took away with her from Seville was that of all the tribulation she had undergone there as salutary penance for her sins.

She left, then, some time during the year 1576, to found Caravaca in the heart of the province of Murcia. There her coming had been waited for a year by three rich young ladies who had been converted by a sermon by a Jesuit Father, and had made the journey to Avila to offer all that was needed to found a reformed convent. As ever, there had been difficulties: one of these was that it had to be released from a local dependence with respect to the Commandery of St James. But a letter from Teresa to Philip II. once again removed all difficulties. She had then only to confront the fatigues of a road which was merely a footpath or mule track, by *caminos de perdices*, it climbed three successive ridges of mountains. It was in connection with Caravaca, however, that she tells us of a sharper trial, namely the leaving of her convents after she had set them going. "The leaving my Daughters and Sisters (whom I so dearly loved) when I was to go from one place to another, I tell you, was to me my greatest Cross; especially when I considered, I was never to see them more, and perceived their sad

resentment thereof, and their tears ; for though they were weaned from all other things, our Lord had not given them this : perhaps that it might be a greater torment to me ; for (methought) neither was I weaned from them."

CHAPTER VIII

THE WAR WITH THE MITIGATED CARMELITES— CONTINUATION AND END OF THE FOUNDATIONS

THERE now followed a fresh break of four years in the foundations. It was filled by what may be termed with only too good reason, the war between the Mitigated and the Reformed Orders. We shall only relate of it just so much as is necessary to understand the part played by St Teresa in the struggle.

This conflict had begun as early as 1575, in the same year as the foundations of the convents of Veas and Seville. The Papal nuncio, Hormaneto, with the sympathy of the King and even at that time of the General, Father Rubeo, strongly favoured the reform. He had, as we have seen, nominated Father Gracian as Visitor to the Fathers of the observance or the Mitigated Carmelites in Andalusia, and to the whole Order in Castille. The appointment to this office of a Father still so young gave occasion for dissatisfaction and protests. The Italian Mitigated were, moreover, much afraid of the progress the reform was making: they feared no doubt that, as one of their Cardinals said, it would compel them some day or other to set about reforming themselves. So they held a Chapter at

Placentia (1575) and voted several decrees restrictive of the movements of the Reformed; they compelled the latter under pain of severe penalties to agree to a certain number of concessions which were practically equivalent to putting an end to their undertaking.

The General, who had been so favourable to St Teresa up to this time, was misled and sided with the Chapter. The result of it was that the Chapter and he sent a Portuguese into Spain, a man at once clever and overbearing, Father Tosdado. He was entrusted, as Vicar-General of the whole of Spain, with the execution of these decrees. The Saint was advised of it at Seville, in May 1576, and immediately suspected what she called the "ways of Rome."

She was loyal enough to recognise that, if Father Gracian had acted with the prudence and moderation that she desired of him, Father Antonio de Jesus and Father Ambrosio de Mariano had been only too successful in endangering the whole thing. "God forgive them," she wrote to Maria de San José, "they would have been able to avoid all the difficulties they have with the Fathers of the Mitigated Order, had they gone about it in a different way. Our Father¹ is very grieved about it." The former, indeed, by his uncompromising and somewhat blundering sanctity, the latter by a residuum of his secular habits and his Neapolitan temperament, had spoilt matters by parading a highly combative spirit against the Mitigated. The Reformer herself, in

¹ *Letters*, i. p. 260.

her letters to Father Rubeo,¹ which are masterpieces, felt bound to admit, and at the same time make excuses for, the indiscretions committed, whilst, however, she endeavoured entirely to exonerate Father Gracian.² She disclosed at the same time the intrigues of the Mitigated, who in Italy said one thing, but quite another in Spain.

Circumstances, then, demanded careful handling, at the expense of her plain-speaking and courage. She had to uphold her own side and at the same time to restrain it; to extricate herself, and her Order too, from their imprudent acts, and yet not to seem to disavow these actions too decidedly. It was then that there began that curious correspondence between Teresa and Father Gracian: to baffle those who might read her letters unlawfully and by accident, she indicates the principal persons, beginning with herself and Father Gracian, by conventional names. For example, she calls the Mitigated sometimes the *Fathers of the cloth* (because of their habits of fine cloth), sometimes the *cats* (symbolical expression which needs no explanation). She guessed clearly

¹ *Letters*, p. 179, 180, 224.

² She had a moment's alarm that he too had put himself in the wrong by letting a measure be passed against the better judgment of himself and Juan della Croce (the nomination of Father Antonio as Provincial, which was carried at the Chapter of Almodovar). "When I think," she said to him, "that you may come to be blamed with good reason, I lose courage. On the other hand if people come to censure you without cause, I should feel my energy increased." (Letter of April 15th, 1578, *Letters*, ii. 205.) But, though this letter contains a serious warning and some very sage advice on this question of jurisdiction, which at that time was very involved, there is no very positive blame in it.

that the cause of her friends, of her sons, would be represented in a false light. "If," she said in a letter dated 15th September 1576, "the Mitigated Carmelites are putting before the Pope their false accusations, and we have no one of our side at Rome to refute them, they will obtain as many briefs as they like against us." She would have liked therefore to have some of the Reformed Carmelites sent to the Holy Father's Court. Doubtless she had the King and the Nuncio Hormaneto on her side; but whether by supernatural or merely human warning, she foretold the approaching death of the latter. For this reason she did all she could to win King Philip II. to the idea of setting up the reformed Order of Carmelites in a province separate from the old observance.

The storm, however, muttered louder and louder. The Nuncio Hormaneto died, and was replaced by Felipe de Segal, bishop of Placentia, who arrived with the desire and even with a special mission to annihilate the Reform. Before his arrival the Royal Council had suspended the powers of the Vicar-General Tostado. The new Nuncio in his turn suspended the powers of Father Gracian, and gave the position of Visitor to the Reformed Carmelites to Father Angel de Salazar, the man of whom the Mother once said, as we read previously: "I never get on very well with him." This was the crisis of their greatest trials.

The heaviest was not—far from it—the order which she had already received, and which had only been suspended out of regard for her health, to give

up her journeys and retire to a convent. Although, in carrying out her foundations, she had done nothing but obey orders, she had cheerfully accepted all the fatigues. But old age was rapidly coming on and this increased her infirmities; the holy Mother, then, came to discover that obedience in this case, although she had hitherto always loved to find it in a cross, became a singularly light burden for her to bear. The troubles which in all ways were doing so much harm to the cause of religion, the calumnies spread against her "beloved son" and the Carmelite nuns under his jurisdiction; the incessant contradictions between distinct forces which she did not know how to reconcile (for some had not yet expired and the others had not yet placed themselves out of reach of all moderation and appeal) all made her declare that: "Really these disputes give us some idea of what the world outside is!" She shuddered to see such violence and treachery placed at the disposal of the worser cause. At last came the time when she had to defend the liberty and even the life of Juan de la Cruz and of Gracian. They had been the most conciliatory of all and yet for these there seemed the most hatred. "I would rather," she wrote to the king, "see them fall into the hands of the Moors, for they might possibly treat them with more leniency." Juan de la Cruz was kept a prisoner in the monastery of the Mitigated Carmelites at Toledo, and they did not know where he was. The Saint feared Father Gracian would be poisoned: so when he was at Seville she secretly made him have his meals in the nuns' sitting

room, which was against rule; moreover, as an additional precaution she sent him, we are assured, an antidote.

Her friends—be it understood her friends of the world—were no less up in arms. Here we are indeed in the sixteenth century and in Spain; in Spain, where later in the course of the great civil wars of our epoch, one party—more moderate, as it claimed, in its views—inscribed on its standard: “Death to the enthusiasts!” One day there came a rumour (entirely imaginary however) that Father Gracian, frightened by the struggle, was renouncing the reform and the side of the Discalced Carmelites. His mother¹ immediately sent him word that she disavowed him for her son, and one of the most devoted friends of the reform, the Count of Tendilla, talked quite plainly of stabbing him.

In spite of her love for the reform and the reformers, St Teresa seemed—and actually was—in the midst of all these violent folk, a marvel of serenity. She knows—let us remember this—that it will all end as God wills. She strikes the note of the feelings that constantly animated her when she writes to another prioress: “You do not at all exaggerate the hostile attitude of Father Tostado against the Discalced Carmelites and myself, he has given plenty of proofs of it. So we have to pray fervently and unceasingly

¹ Juana de Antisco, daughter of a Polish ambassador, who, after having twenty children, was still considered one of the handsomest people in Spain. St Teresa’s affection for her was ardent. She gave her a rare proof of it, by kissing her on the day she left her near the door of St Joseph.

that God will deliver our Father from the hands of these men, and that peace may reign at last in our monasteries."

In September, 1578, however, Juan de la Cruz came out of prison, and the Mother at once advised Father Gracian to take care of him to his utmost power. She herself wished more strongly than ever to send some trustworthy persons to Rome, to ask there for the separation of the two Provinces, but she would have liked the journey to be made secretly, and hesitated to send any of the Discalced Fathers; she said: "They had not had sufficient experience of the ways of Rome."¹ She preferred to send a layman and to make all the convents contribute to the expenses of the journey.² At length, after much dissension and many fears and many expressions of righteous anger, the King summoned the Nuncio and reproached him with his hostility towards the Reform in such terms as admitted of no reply. In 1580 he obtained the definite separation

¹ Nowhere, in any of her writings that have come down to us, has she said a word about the troubles of the Pontifical court in the Renaissance. However, Father Grégoire de St Joseph restores us the following passage from a *Relation* which he takes to have been written between 1576 and 1577: 'One Corpus Christi evening I was kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament exposed, when I saw Christ our Saviour descending from the pyx and coming towards me. He seemed sad, and His head was covered with blood. He said to me: "It is the Princes of my Church that have brought Me to this."' These are hard words, and only a Saint could have used them. One sees in them the Spaniard ever suspicious of Italian politics.

² However, they sent Father Juan de Jesus (de la Roca), and the Mother appeared satisfied with him.

of the two Provinces, and Father Gracian was appointed Provincial of the Reformed Order. At the same time San José of Avila was taken away from the episcopal jurisdiction, and placed under the common jurisdiction of the Order of Carmel. To the Saint and Father Gracian, but above all to the Saint, it may be said, the glory of the victory belonged.

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During the four years thus spent (1576-1580) St Teresa had not only marshalled all the resources of her diplomacy, and struggled, with advice and tactics alike, for the defence of her works and of her friends: she had taken up again (if she can be said ever to have left it off) her interior life. At least she had been led to scrutinise its depths afresh, to give to others the secret, as far as she possibly could. It is at this period that she wrote the *Castle Interior*, and several of the *Relations*, wherein she tries to explain her supernatural states of being. At the same time she was receiving revelations, among which was that in the little hermitage of Nazareth at San José in which the four fundamental rules for the government of the Discalced Carmelites were sketched out to her.¹

Toledo, however, where she had been ordered to

¹ "In the midst of a profound Recollection, I heard from our Lord that which I will now relate; namely, 'that I should from Him bid the Discalced Fathers endeavour to observe four things; which whilst they kept, this Order should always go on increasing. . . .

'The first was, that the Heads should agree.

"The second, that though they had many Convents, there should in each one be but few Friars.

remain during 1577 and 1578, had not been a Patmos filled with groaning and ecstasies. It is here, on the contrary, that she has perhaps given us the most perfect testimony of that delicate grace of hers which accompanied the energetic guidance given by her to so many people, monks and nuns, priests and laymen, upper and lower class, her equals or relatives. During her struggles and in the most critical moments her correspondence shows her to us facing everything, forgetting nothing, neither the interests of Heaven nor those of the earth, even busying herself joyfully with the little postulants who, to her mind, did not laugh often enough, or only with lips too "pursed up," which she could in no wise endure. Her brother Lorenzo had bought an estate (at Serna). She could not understand at all, why, absorbed as he then was, with contemplation and penance, he should neglect his children's fortune: she was even able to show him that in this indifference a kind of snare was laid for the false detachment of a certain type of mystic. "Jacob," she wrote to him, "did not cease to be a Saint for minding his flocks, nor Abraham, nor holy Joachim: but when we seek to fly trouble everything wearies us."

Some days after this little recall to common sense, Don Alvaro de Mendoza sent her a series of answers

'The third, that they should converse little with secular Persons; and that for the good of their souls.

'The fourth, that they should Preach more by their Works than Words.'

"This was in the year 1579 (the eve of Pentecost). And, because it is an eminent Truth, I have subscribed it with my Name."

made⁷ to a kind of religious riddle for her opinion on them. The question was the sentence she had heard during a prayer of contemplation, "Soul, seek thyself in me," and explanations had been given by Don Lorenzo, Francisco de Salcedo, Julian de Avila, and Juan de la Cruz. She was to criticise all four under the form of *vejamen*, that is the critical cross-examination which Spanish students undergo the evening before their examination for the doctor's decree.

Now, she could combine profound criticism with cutting words,¹ and her summing up was that these gentlemen had all aimed too high. She did not except Juan de la Cruz, and what she says of him is by no means only valuable as a flash of wit.

"The reply," she says, "has nothing to do with the question which is at issue. Sad would be our lot, if we could only seek after God when we have become dead to the world! The Magdalen, the Samaritan, the Canaanitish woman were certainly not dead to the world when they found the Saviour.

"He dwells much on the necessity of becoming one with God by uniting ourselves with Him; now when this comes to pass, when such a favour is granted, we ought not to say that the soul is seeking God, for it has already found Him. May the Saviour deliver me from people who are so exalted in spiritual

¹ This, for instance: "Señor de Salcedo never stops repeating through the whole of his paper: As St Paul says, as the Holy Spirit says; and he ends by declaring that he has written nothing but nonsense. . . . I am going to denounce him to the Inquisition, which is close at hand."

matters that they desire, cost what it may, to ascribe everything to the state of perfect contemplation! However, we ought to be grateful to him for having so well explained things that we did not ask him; that is why it is so excellent a thing to talk of God at all times; we reap the benefit where we least expected it."

The whole series of her letters is up to the standard of this dainty extract; her judgment is so wise, her gratitude is so sincere, and the familiar details of her government are mixed up with the most thorny of her negotiations. Thus did she fill up the intervals between her foundations.

She was now about to continue the journeys, which the last Nuncio had condemned so strongly. "Do not speak of that woman to me," he had said to Juan de la Cruz, "she is a gadder, a vagrant, a restless and disobedient woman, and an ambitious person who busies herself to teach others, as though she were a Doctor, in spite of St Paul's prohibition."¹ He forgot that if she had braved so many journeys it had been at the command of her superiors. He himself, moreover, was not slow to withdraw this uncharitable judgment.

To become the sedentary Carmelite nun once more, and the friend of the cell as she had formerly been, she would have had more than enough cause, for, as she writes, illness and infirmities never ceased to "rain upon this poor old woman." She had broken her arm by a fall from the top of a staircase; here, as in her youth, they had brought her a quack whose drastic

¹ *General History*, Book IV. chap. iv., Cf. Boll. No. 799.

remedies had considerably added to her sufferings. But she had been urgently summoned for a long time to Villanueva de la Jara, in old Castille. Nine young women, four of whom were sisters, had started of their own accord a little community where they lived a life of penance and extreme poverty. They desired to become members of some constituted Order and implored the coming of the Mother, whose renown went on increasing every day.

She put them off for a long time, giving as her reason in the first instance, that people who had already formed habits (however praiseworthy these might be) always found it difficult to conform and bend to ready-made rules imposed upon them from outside. She thought too that Villanueva de la Xara was too far off from the rest of her other foundations; whence it would be, she concluded, less easy than ever to keep in its integrity the common spirit of unity of the convents. But the entreaties of these poor girls and of those who were interested in their request at length overcame her hesitation. Moreover, she saw one day in a vision that our Lord was displeased with her, and reproached her with her cowardice. She set out therefore in confidence and joy.

She took two nuns of San José de Avila, and the lay sister without whom she could not move, since she had broken her arm, good sister Ana de San Bartolomé. She passed through the place to which the blessed Catalina de Cardona had retired, the descendant of the Kings of Aragon, the old governess of Don Carlos and of Don John of Austria. Here was

an establishment of Discalced Carmelite Friars, who welcomed her by the chanting of a *Te Deum*, with voices which bore witness, she tells us, to the privations they inflicted on themselves. Her whole journey, too, was a lengthened procession. From village to village people flung themselves at her feet, they scaled the walls of the houses where she was receiving hospitality, and the help of the local authorities was needed to force a passage for her poor carriages, which almost came to pieces at the least touch. A well-to-do working-man who learnt that she would pass through his fields had prepared "a good repast and collation" for her in his house. She would not accept anything in spite of his urgent invitations, nor put her foot to the ground. He then gathered together all his sons and daughters, and sons-in-law, and even his flocks; then like a patriarch of the Bible as the Carmelite Nun of our day very aptly suggests he went forward to post himself and his entire household on her route; for he meant at least to have her blessing. She gave it him and was deeply touched.

All the bells in the town rang to announce her coming when she was within a short distance of Villanueva (which she reached on the first Sunday in Lent 1580) and the little children came and knelt before her. The municipal council in a body, the parish priest and all the clergy, with the most influential people of the town, were assembled at the gates, to accompany the Blessed Sacrament to the house which was to become the convent. A procession was organised with bands of music, and

banners, and it stopped from time to time before altars prepared in the streets. . . . But nothing gave her greater joy than the intimacy with the minds of those who had sent for her, in which she so quickly found herself. She was received with tears of joy, and she gave to all the earnestly coveted habit of the Carmelite Order.

She received, the same year, an almost equally touching welcome from the people of Palencia. She was called there by her old bishop of Avila, Don Alvaro de Mendoza. But she wished to make this foundation without endowment, and she did not think the town could raise sufficient resources. Father Ripalda and Father Baltazar Alvarez were not able to overcome her this time. True that in the interval and after a sojourn of a month at Villanueva de la Jara and a short stop at Toledo, she had been seized at Valladolid by a disease which was considered mortal. But once again the words of Our Lord came to raise her from her weakness and from the discouraged condition which resulted from the illness. "What are you afraid of?" she heard the voice say to her in tender reproach. "When did I at any time forsake you? I am the same now, that I was." "Oh great God," she adds when she had recalled this favour, "how do your Words differ from mine! I became herewith so resolute and valiant that all the world leagued against me could not prevaile, by whatsoever opposition, to have hindered me from attempting it."¹ But the world

¹ With the pains she ever took to note and analyse everything, she says elsewhere: "My cowardice vanished instantly, which clearly

did not league against her; all the difficulties smoothed out, and it was on this occasion that the magistrate said to Father Gracian: "Go, my Father, and see that they have what they want at once. The Mother Teresa de Jesus must hold some decree from the Royal Council of God, for we are obliged to do all she wishes in spite of ourselves."

The foundations which followed at Soria and at Granada (the Saint herself was quite unable to journey to the latter) were made "with much sweetness and willingness;" so she summed the thing up, for to her the fatigues of the return from Soria, in which she lost her way several times, counted for nothing.

In return God reserved to the last of all, to that of Burgos, trials of more than one sort, for really she seemed destined to find less warm a reception in the large towns than in the small ones. The tribulations which awaited her in the town of the Cid were but the continuation of those that she had experienced sometimes in one place, sometimes in another. In exchange for the insufferable heat of Seville she had to contend with the severe cold of the north and such floods that her carriages proceeded as best they could, at times over raised roads, from which they were almost precipitated into the gulf over which they hung, at others in low lying bottoms or in the middle of the water, so that they

proved that it came not from the sickness nor my old age." That is an excess of humility; but she might have said with perfect truth: If I became more resolute, it certainly was not that my illness was cured nor my age any the less.

could not tell where the road was: many times the travellers were on the point of being drowned. In addition the Mother was suffering from partial paralysis and from a terribly sore throat, not to mention her stomachic affections, a continual fever and oft renewed pains in her broken arm.

At Burgos, again, when at last she did reach it, she found herself face to face with an archbishop who was too much inclined to ignore his promises. He had given complete permission orally, which ought to be sufficient according to the decree of the Council of Trent; but he invented most ingenious methods of withdrawing his consent, and for a long time he put obstacles in the way of the definite establishment. This was on account of there being already a large number of convents at the public charge; and he intended that the new arrivals should have not only their own house, but their own income. In the meantime . . . he was quite ready to pronounce that they had his permission to return. Upon this the sick woman, ever cheerful, could not help exclaiming: "Indeed the roads were delightful and the weather magnificent for setting out again!" On the other hand the archbishop, who was very punctilious, did not wish the purchase-money of the house to be paid for by the dowries of the nuns brought together for the foundation.

St Teresa had however been entreated to come to Burgos by the Jesuit Fathers; she might well be amazed to find their usual prudence and customary success at fault. She had indeed the temporal support of a rich lady, Catalina de Tolosa,

and the spiritual aid of her provincial, Father Gracian; but he was so distressed at the sad plight of the Mother, that it was still she who had to give courage to him. She was far enough away from those enthusiastic and touching receptions of the humble villages. Sometimes it was a woman who, seeing her cross a stream at her side, pushed her brutally off and threw her into the mud. At another time it was some men who passing, in a church, by this poor and meanly dressed woman, and thinking she did not get out of their way quickly enough, pushed her with their feet so that she fell. From the eve of St Matthew until that of St Joseph she lodged in a hospital, working all the time to buy a house. She was in the midst of other sick folk to whom she distributed the oranges or the lemons that Catalina of Tolosa sent for her own use. Thus during the several weeks of her stay she so gained the affection of every one that they constantly asked to see her; her very presence seemed to comfort them; when she left them they could not console themselves for their loss.

Her moral strength, which was carried to the perfection of heroism, was not, then, diminishing, but her natural strength was giving out. The Saint could not help remarking, too, that her companions' state of mind was not the same as her own. She admired their slowness to be affected by trouble, their light-heartedness which reappears so quickly from all difficulties, which even feels a sort of charm in talking about them. As ever, her humility profits by saying: It is because they are more obedient than I.—No! it

was simply that their youth rebounded further from fear and discouragement.

At last, however, as had happened early in every case, they found a perfect house at a most reasonable price which several religious communities with incomprehensible blindness had not deigned to purchase. "The garden, the view and the water all make a veritably enchanting residence." The archbishop who came to look over the whole estate was charmed with it; and as there is nothing like success for clearing away hindrances "there was immense rejoicing throughout the whole town." On the inauguration day musicians came unbidden to enhance the splendour of the ceremony. In the matter of subsistence, her mind was to be set at rest by Catalina of Tolosa who was about to enter the Carmelite Order and to take with her her two sons and five daughters.

This was the last of the foundations. Teresa was sixty-seven years of age and death was not far off.

CHAPTER IX

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE ORDER

THE foundations were made with the object of bringing the reform into effect. But the convents once built and inhabited they must be governed or, more valuable perhaps still, others must be taught the art of governing them well. Here as elsewhere our heroine had a superabundant supply of all the graces: she knew how to impart the gift of ruling, which she possessed and exercised with so happy a blending of charm and of authority, that here too her daughters were assured of finding in her an example and teaching.

She had been, as we know, prioress at San José and at the Encarnacion. But her office only lasted a very short time. When she founded a convent, she at once appointed a prioress, and, whilst she herself remained in the house, she endeavoured to show in the daily life that she was as subject as the rest to the authority she had just established. It is not the less true that in virtue of the power she had received, it was she who selected the prioresses at the beginning of each foundation, who planned their duties and, while obeying them in the course of their functions, observed in what manner

they ruled. She it was who managed their temporal affairs and gave advice on the acceptance or refusal of postulants: then by degrees she made herself answerable for all and redressed what seemed to her to need redressing.

Had Teresa a special title? It was at all events not that of Superior General; they called her, it would appear "the foundress"—the *madre fundadora*, as the little novice Isabel, sister to Father Gracian, sang of her one day. She herself took or recognised this title, since she writes on one occasion to the Mother Maria de San José. "Let them ask my opinion and they will choose you to replace me as foundress at my death. Let them nominate you even while I am alive, I consent to it with all my heart."

It is quite certain that during the twenty years her foundations took, between the establishment of San José de Avila up to her death, she had the government of all these houses, first in fact, and we might even say, in law. "Knowing what manner of woman she was," said Mother Maria de San José,¹ "and of how great importance that fact was, they (the Apostolic Visitors) began first and foremost by giving her power over all the convents she founded." She confirms this herself in a letter of the 30th May, 1582, (noted for its severity) to the prioress Ana de Jesus. She declares that for the Discalced Carmelites she possessed controlling powers given her by the Father Provincial. In

¹ The *Bouquet of Myrrh*, quoted in the *Memoir* on the Discalced Carmelite Nuns, chap. xvii.

fact she considered herself distinctly charged with such authority, since several times she declares herself very anxious to be relieved of it.¹

Indeed she took it very seriously, knowing that all communities, and especially communities of women, need to be strictly controlled and that to have authority there is nothing like taking it by ascendancy and resolution. She had indeed seen this at the Convent of the Encarnacion: "I know how matters stand and when the nuns see a head they acknowledge it instantly, although they may begin by uttering loud outcries." She was most certainly charitable, grateful, and forgiving, and it was in very truth that she declared she would gladly have given her life for her sisters. But she was of opinion that for those in positions of authority it was "a less ill without comparison to faile in the being very gentle and kind, than in the being strict and impartial,"² for authority amounts to nothing if it is not feared, that is to say if it is not known that she who has the responsibility will never tolerate contempt of discipline and "will not swerve from what tends to greater Perfection, though the World sink."

In face of the necessity of being adequate to an obligation thus conceived there was no question of humility, the humility which could prevent ruling with clear-sightedness could be as false and dangerous as that which could turn a person aside from communing with God in prayer. It was to a man

¹ See *Letters*, i., p. 174-206.

² *Manner of Visiting Convents of Nuns*.

and a prior, a dignitary who played a much debated part, it is true, but unquestionably an important one, to Father Nicholas Doria, she wrote the following lines: "The art of governing does not consist, be convinced, Father, in always hunting out one's own sins; we must often forget self altogether and recollect that one holds office for God,¹ that we are doing things in His name and that His Almighty power will give us what we need, as it does to all holding high offices; for we ought not to have any other helper. Do not then give way to a misplaced² humility."

It evidently needs a corresponding determination of character to carry out such a high sense of duty. This was a point upon which she insisted so strongly, that if she had to relegate someone to a second rank and tell them God had not seen fit to endow them with the gift of ruling others, she had a favourite phrase: "He thinks but of the doing and undoing." Now, she says elsewhere with pride, that is good for women of the world but is not applicable to nuns. What can they do to free themselves from such a danger? In the convent there is no difficulty; its rules and constitutions must be kept in their entirety and nothing attempted which could tend to compromise them. With such a method there is no risk of inconsistency.

¹ To how many fathers of families in our day might not this apply!

² *Letters*, iii., 285. The word she uses here, *mogigato*, has been translated differently. Some take it to mean a false self-abasement, hypocritical and bigoted; others, a mixture of apparent timidity with craftiness. The context of this letter does not imply that the Saint was so abstruse, on that occasion.

A still greater safeguard against coming to that pass is careful preservation of the *personnel* of convents. Putting aside cases where health imperatively demands change (and even these must be looked into very carefully) no changing of convents should be allowed. Even the first prioress of a foundation should not be lightly changed unless for some striking misconduct. It was a great thing to have moved her from her original position to take the command of a new foundation. When that foundation was an established thing, the person who came to work in it ought not to stir from it. To do otherwise was to abandon the peculiar gifts that God must have bestowed upon her, that salutary influence of enthusiasm which was needful to carry out properly an undertaking which was always a difficult one.

The great foundress, for her own part, exercised this authority exactly as she taught it to others. First and foremost, on the choice of novices, for on that depends the foundation. Before all they must be intelligent; and by intelligent women she meant definitely not those who had much cleverness (in spite of her having once said very happily: Nobody could have too much!) nor much imagination, but those who had good judgment. She even went so far as to place this qualification above the budding shoots of a more than ordinarily high degree of piety: a person can train herself to piety; but nothing can give judgment to one who does not possess it. Therefore, says she, in her own words: "May God preserve us from stupid nuns!" "I

repeat it and you must believe me, we need nuns with talent.”¹

When she found out such suitable young girls, the question of the amount of dowry they might be able to bring with them hardly entered her thoughts. It was even a delight to her to open her doors and her arms to them. No doubt she must often have blessed God for sending her novices who helped her out of great pecuniary straits, either to buy a house or to redeem a rent, or pay some debts (for the latter she hated.) She was all the more relieved because she would always have liked to give and not to ask for things, and disliked nothing so much as going “begging and collecting.”² So that when gifts arrived without having been solicited she accepted them most willingly; she returned thanks to the donor gratefully and also with dignity. But she was convinced, and had sufficient faith to believe that all convents where the inmates “do not make too much of themselves” would always be safe from destitution and would receive more than they wanted. Therefore she always adjured her prioresses with great solemnity to conclude nothing without first clearly defining all the conditions, to settle in due form the question of dowry (when there was any) but always to relegate this to the background, never to accept inherited property, and to avoid all law suits. When she

¹ *Letters*, ii. 38. Cf. i. 21.

² “Of a truth,” she adds, “that is great torment to me, and without the love of God, for whom I am working I could not endure it.”

did become involved in a contest she possessed a peculiar faculty of making it known that she knew her own rights, and that she had sufficient reliance on people's sense of honour to count on their respecting them; but she had no intention of going beyond this point.

When she had accepted her novices she expected from them . . . perfection and saintliness of life. Yes indeed! It was to this end she liked them to be at once intelligent and courageous, and for this reason, too, she kept a watch on all the crevices by which imperfection might creep in. No detail was beneath her notice; when some rule had once been formulated in the constitutions, she would neither allow the subordinate members to ignore it, nor the superiors to spare themselves the trouble of making certain that it was punctually observed. Her opusculè written by order of Father Gracian, *On the manner of visiting*¹ *Convents of Nuns*, is a finished model of accuracy. She expected of the Visitor that he should shrink from no part of his task, no matter how humble it might seem; he ought, in fact, to justify all he does by his knowledge of souls, of their needs, their weaknesses, and by a thoroughly reasoned adaptation of all these means to the end ever in view—namely the perfecting of the convent.

But when the essential rules were well established by punctilious watchfulness, she had no notion of her nuns being slaves . . . to anything or to anybody except this rule itself. It must be explained to them

¹ That is, inspecting.

until they have grasped—sometimes a difficult matter to certain souls—its meaning, its spirit and its inevitability. But when that was done, it must be left to each individual to govern her own inner life and to choose her path, or at least to walk in the direction which seemed pointed out to her by the Holy Spirit. No one, of course, is left to herself, to her own individual reason, since direction is given her; but no one should be made to submit to a direction which does not suit her. No one ought to be urged nor even engaged to keep the same direction always, “All is Holy without doubt” (in confession she means). “But God deliver us from those confessors who have been addressed by the same people for many a long year!”¹ Here she saw an abuse which conduced to a fixed routine, or proved that there was one already established, and from the time this comes about there is no longer any true spiritual life left. To her regular confessor let each confess her sins promptly and add as few words after confession as possible. There will still remain the precious liberty of conversing with others. The prioress can play an important role here, that of the judicious adviser, the friend who should know how to impose her wishes tactfully. But the great reformer did not spare either blame or witty ridicule to that visitor who desired to add to the length of the list of rules each year, or to the prioress who wanted all her daughters to mortify themselves just in the same way as she did, to practise the same system of prayer, and think as

¹ *Letters*, iii. 204.

she thought, without taking into account either the natural capability or the degree of spiritual advancement or special gifts of grace they might possess individually.

This blending of inflexibility as regards the absolute dominion of the rule, with freedom in the inner life of the soul, ought to give to each convent that most necessary but frequently most threatened boon of peace. The prioress will never try to push her own personal views or put passionate feeling into anything. The rule being the true sovereign, no one will be surprised if the latest admitted of the nuns should denounce the neglect of it to the visitor, and if the latter should urge upon all to be strict in the duty of observing it. Further still, all being held as equally worthy of respect and affection, there will be no particular friendships and their language and conversation will be open and simple. "It will not copy that of the women in the world, who make use of elegant, new and fashionable expressions. . . . I believe," the Saint said, "they call them Phrases."¹

From all these combined conditions will issue light-hearted cheerfulness. St Teresa was not the first nor the only one to see in a cheerful spirit one of the most characteristic signs of a true religious vocation; but we may claim that she specially upheld and exemplified it in her own person. It was a gaiety that was sometimes unrestrained and almost rough, since many of the Carmels in Spain still keep up the practice of playing drums, tambourines, and

¹ The *Manner of Visiting*, etc.

Basque drums of the time of the Saint; sometimes seasoned with songs and poems.

To be very sure that the full development of this joyful spirit should not be seriously impaired, she ever guarded against an enemy which she studied and tracked and pursued and wished to rout altogether by every means in her power. This was what she called melancholy. There was no holiness in melancholy!¹ She says elsewhere: "Count over the troubles we have had with devotees of this kind. . . . It were better far to have no foundation at all than to fill it with melancholy nuns. Nuns of that type are the ruin of monasteries."²

Perhaps I may be permitted to enlarge on this topic a little further, for the Saint returns to it over and over again. She gives us quite a dissertation on the subject in one chapter of the *Foundations*, since she felt that for her prioresses and for herself it was one of the chief sources of anxiety connected with their government.

The method she adopted, for she had a very rigorous one, was founded upon that keen observation of hers which nothing escaped. Is it not a surprise indeed to those who already understand, or think they understand, this extraordinary woman to find her writing descriptions and a classification

¹ *Letters*, i. 215. Cf. *ibid.* ii. 108-420.

² Had she the opportunity of studying this melancholy in her own person? It may be! for she says in a letter of May, 1574: "I am nearly well. The syrup of which I am telling our Father took from me the torture of melancholy which I was suffering, and, I think, has quite delivered me from the fever."

which are not only worthy of Charcot and the medical faculty at the Salpêtrière, but which were in advance of their ideas? We must first of all enquire what she designates under the name of melancholy. Was it merely a simple condition of sadness? or a more pronounced affection of the brain, a true mental malady? Well, we must not be afraid to say it, she saw with admirable perspicacity that in melancholy there is a series of troubles, unequal but related and akin to one another; for in her advices she deals with what our practitioners call sometimes neurasthenia, sometimes hysteria, sometimes mania, but she distinguishes very clearly how these different conditions form an ascending scale¹ which, in fact, binds them together in a single group.

She sees very plainly from the beginning that there is in this condition something more than an eccentricity of character, more than an accidental blemish or requisite of the imagination. "This troublesome humour," she says, "should be styled *The Great Infirmary* (and how great a one it is!) and care should be taken of it, as such." . . . "It is the more dangerous," she adds, because in other *Sicknesses*, either they recover, or dye: of this 'tis a wonder, if they recover; nor do they dye of it."

She also sees, we will say, the different degrees of this complaint, And in what way does she see them? A philosopher, who is also a doctor of medicine, wrote only a few years back a little treatise on the *Intellectual states of Melancholy*, in which he sums

¹ For the whole of this analysis, see the *Foundations*, xii. and xiii.

up the teaching of contemporary men of science. "Four variations of this morbid state," he says, "are usually recognised—viz. conscientious melancholy, depressive melancholy, anxious melancholy and lethargic melancholy." The first is still closely akin to neurasthenia and is very difficult to distinguish from it; the last is indisputably one of the worst forms of madness, and the intervening forms seem indeed to have more than one point of resemblance and of connection with hysteria.

Now without defining them so precisely, St Teresa distinctly recognised these four stages and she described them with quite a scientific force. Must it not be conscientious melancholy she has in view when she speaks of those persons who although suffering from melancholy preserve their reason . . ., who make for themselves a perpetual torture out of their inner troubles, their imagination and their scruples; "these latter are caused by their ignorance of the fact that the imagination is too often independent of the will; therefore they reason endlessly about their scruples and every one of their temptations is a cause of overwhelming sadness to them."

Next comes depressive melancholy, and this affects natures which have not the "fundamental principle of resistance," so their life is "a martyrdom," unless they cure themselves by a resolution, made either by their own efforts or from fear or from compulsion, of perpetual obedience.

Again, is it not an instance of anxious melancholy when, as this profound observer notices, the patient refuses to allow herself to be guided because she

believes she sees visions, which visions are nothing but "the result of a disordered imagination."

And finally, it would seem that we have reached lethargic melancholy in the following case she gives. "Sometimes melancholy destroys our reason altogether, though in such a case there is no fault, as there is none in idiots, for all the extravagances they commit." This then is in fact the disastrous completion of these four acts—the prologue to which is neurasthenia, not so named, but on the whole well known and accurately described by the reformer of the Order of Carmel.

If she could observe, she also knew how to obtain information. She remembered for instance that there was such a thing as partial madness. Apparently certain doctors of her time had explained it to her. Now, if she had had sorry experience from quacks from whose hands she twice narrowly escaped death, she would seem to have held some of the respect for really trained medical men which she had for confessors possessed of knowledge of "doctrine." When she recommends to any of her sisters in her letters some remedy or other, she does not rely only on her own personal experience, even if she had found great benefit from it; she adds "Consult your doctor about it."

Was it after herself consulting them that she indicates to her prioresses the line they should take up against the attacks of that melancholy which was the scourge of some of the convents? At all events she shows herself here as in every thing most motherly and practical. If the nun is tired by these

excesses which our contemporaries call overdriving . . . that is to say in devotion and asceticism; if she is exhausted by her penances, they must be stopped for a time and she must be sent into the open air. If too weak from fasting she must be made to eat, drink and sleep more than usual until her natural powers are restored: she must be given meat.¹ If the patient is a person whose weak imagination gives rise to nothing but vain and silly feelings, protracted prayer must be forbidden her and she must be put to an active life and employed in the various domestic duties of the house. If of a temperament in which weak nerves, by suppressing the power of self-control, have opened the gates to passion and caprice, at all hazards she must be induced to place herself under the control of another. If she does not submit willingly, she must be compelled to do so at any cost: this is the only means of, in the first place, diverting very serious dangers, and next, of re-establishing an order which shall make its peaceable influence supreme by working steadily from the outside inwards, from bodily habits to habits of mind.

Her theory of government then was not confined to an accumulation of rules, for she knew no more

¹ She is not afraid of going into more commonplace details. For melancholic subjects she says: "Let care be taken that they eat fish but seldom" (*Foundations* xi.). I asked a doctor of medicine for an explanation of this, and he replied: "Fish is usually forbidden to herpetic and to arthritic subjects; now many neuropathologists think that neurasthenic subjects are often descended from people afflicted with those diseases." Is this what St Teresa guessed or observed?

rules than those of the constitutions of the Order, which are brief. She had a system which rests mainly on a marvellous knowledge of the human mind and is animated by a largeness of charity which disdains absolutely nothing that may prove useful. In her tract on the *Manner of visiting Convents of Nuns*, she says: "There are some so out of measure perfect, to their thinking, that all they see seems to them a defect: and these are ever they that have most defects." This was not at all her own care. She demanded perfection, but as one asks who does not think herself to have attained it. That was precisely why she unconsciously was herself an example of perfection. Neither her lofty piety, nor her supernatural meditations, nor her deep knowledge absorbed her to the point of making her neglect any detail of what was needful to the wise economic administration of her houses. We see her in her completest and truest light when she writes ingenuously and humorously to her brother:¹

"It is no small thing that I have been able to busy myself with all these matters; but with these houses belonging to the Order, which are God's, I have become so clever and versed in business matters that now I know everything. I rejoice to possess this knowledge, because I look upon your affairs as being those of God."

¹ *Letters*, i. 57.

CHAPTER X

FRIENDSHIPS AND OPPOSITION—CONFESSORS

ALL great work is more or less collective. If not from one side it is from another, and this is specially true in the Church. It will therefore complete the study of such a noble spirit, and grand life, to notice how she had to respond to more than one friendship, and to withstand more than one opposition. It will complete the picture still further to understand the Saint's principal confessors, both those who were the friends who supported her most warmly, and those whose opposition had tried her the most.

We will begin with the confessors, since it was they who, by their inexperience or their experience, their clumsiness or their wisdom, the most strongly affected the progress of her spiritual life.

It is a fully ascertained fact and well known to all acquainted with Teresa's life, that it was twenty years before she discovered a confessor who understood her. She says so herself.¹ It is no less certain that she hardly found five or six among the twenty-

¹ See *Life*, iv. and vii. And the dates at the beginning of this period from 1535 or 1537, according as we adopt one or other of the two chronologies by which the precise date of her entry into the religious life is variously fixed.

five confessors who listened to her, with whom she had reason to be fully satisfied. She tells us, however, that: "It was not an easy matter to satisfy me." On this, as on so many other points, she was sincerity itself and not at all inclined to tone down the expression of her feelings. So much so, it seems to me, that, to understand her often bitter complaints as we should, we must clearly recollect that Saints like Teresa are rare, and consequently so are priests up to the standard of such souls. It is also not a little interesting, to mention it in passing, that the severity of the Saint's opinions and the liveliness of her regrets were prompted principally by nothing else than the depth of her humility. Indeed, we may be quite sure that the very natural reflection we have just made never occurred to her.

What did she complain of most? This; that the men she bared her soul to were far too timid. "Alas! because of our sins, those spiritual masters who are not excessively cautious are so rare!"—"I wanted not many friends," she says again, "who would not fail to help me to fall," (into lukewarmness and indifference to the great graces); "but towards the recovering and raising me up I found myself fearfully alone." She exacted two qualifications from her confessors. First, doctrine, that is, scientific knowledge, and it seems to have been a very long time before she found one possessing it in an adequate degree. Then she demanded something infinitely more difficult to find, which she called experience; but let us mark carefully that with her the word meant . . . experience of the peculiar graces, which

had been bestowed on her, and experience of the paths by which she herself had been called to walk. Notwithstanding, failing these two conditions, they must, according to her thinking, be able to satisfy ■ third test : they should understand that a confessor ought always to try and carry his penitent beyond himself, rather than keep her to his own level, if he were not able himself to soar to her height. In other words he ought always to encourage rather than repress any soul who aspired to a loftier state of perfection. She does not always express this very plainly, but she thought it and allowed it to be understood over and over again.

Having explained this, we will put aside those confessors who were too commonplace and, with still more reason, those whom she herself had to convert, and will turn to those who deserved to be reckoned, those she respected and admired, whom she loved even when she was not in sympathy with them.

With the Jesuits, but above all with the one of their number who had been her confessor for years, Fr. Baltasar Alvarez, she was a pupil, still timorous and firmly kept in check, one may even say repressed, whenever her raptures had seemed of an exceptional character.

With the Franciscan Pedro d'Alcántara as also with Juan de la Cruz she was a rival in mysticism and asceticism, a rival perfectly understood and fully encouraged.

With the Dominicans she was a friend.

To the Carmelite Friars of the Reformed Order

—in a lesser degree to Juan de la Cruz, more with Father Gracian—she was a mother, but a mother who was so proud of her sons that she took a pride in showing her obedience to them, even although it was she who had completed the tempering and shaping of them.¹

We will now take up these various groups.

Fr. Baltasar Alvarez was a Saint; and no one contributed more to his deserved reputation of saintliness than St Teresa. But we must know the conditions under which they met one another. When he undertook the direction of her soul (we are obliged to go back for a moment) the question of deciding whether the supernatural phenomena which worked in her were really of Divine prompting had already given him very great anxiety. She herself had no doubt at all about it; but two of her friends at Avila² set themselves to raise doubts in her mind.

One was a priest, Gaspar Daza, the other a religious-minded gentleman, a sincere friend, Francisco de Salcedo, who, having lost his wife, was later ordained priest (1570), but it is a noteworthy circumstance that he had put himself under the direction of Fr. Baltasar Alvarez since 1558, apparently but a very short time before the Saint did so.

¹ These distinctions may be explained in part by the characteristics of the various Orders to which she applied for guidance. But, to be completely impartial and just, we must remember that these stages coincided with the principal phases of her youth, her maturity and her old age, and then with the development of her sanctity and the progress of her great renown.

² See above, p. 74. See also chapter vi.

She extols Gaspar Daza's virtues much, but says : " I found, that he meant to carry the business of my soul after such manner, as if he would make an end thereof, as it were, all at once, and I saw, that I had need of much more consideration, and art to effect this. . . . And certainly, I conceive, that if I had not been to treat with any other than him, my soul would never have improved, and thriven."¹ He evidently took too literally the humility of his penitent and those avowals in which she declared her inability to realize—from one day to the other—the type of perfection that he expected of her. Perhaps too he was like others who, having known some one in their early days and having lived in the same town with them, find it difficult to look upon them as a superior being. In short, he thought her not at all worthy yet to receive such great favours from God : consequently, by the aid of a syllogism, he concluded that if the power which wrought within her was not from God it must be the work of the Devil. He shared that opinion with the most gentle but very timid Francisco de Salcedo. Later they were to unite in proving to the Saint the complete sincerity of their devotion, for we know they helped her to found San José.² But in this matter they were together against her.

¹ *Life*, xxiii.

² See above, p. 146. Daza, moreover, was always her very intimate and keenly appreciated friend. Ten years later she wrote to him from Valladolid (*Letters*, i, 31) with her usual charm : " Don't imagine that it is waste of time to write to me ; I need a letter from you sometimes, but on condition that you do not tell me so often you are an old man ; that pains me to the very depths of

As for Salcedo, his conviction was that the young Carmelite was an excellent nun, but strongly in peril of being seduced by the evil spirit and falling into his snares. He believed so still more since to him also she made herself out an infidel, unworthy that her God should look upon her. Moreover, his was a soul which had been led along the paths of fear and had no kind of experience of the things upon which he was consulted.

Two Jesuits came, for a little time, but all too short, and dissipated the effects of the pessimistic advice of Salcedo and Daza. First came Father Juan de Padranos, in 1557: she ever held him in grateful remembrance. Fifteen years after, we shall find her speaking to him in her correspondence as to a highly valued friend; and even in a letter where she hurls epigrams of a somewhat vigorous nature on the Society she writes of his "high perfection." He it was who threw "light on her condition," and had given her back her confidence and courage by "prophesying" to her—this is the Saint's own expression—what the Saviour was about to fulfil in her. Moreover he suggested a twofold system to her; he taught her first to treat mortification as the basis

my soul. . . . Please God to prolong your life until I die! But then, so that I may not be above without you, I shall implore our Lord to call you thither swiftly."

She gives us also some pleasant glimpses into the nature of the good Salcedo, a simple and generous man who used to bring the nuns radishes and apples from his garden with his own hands. It was his maid-servant who used to keep a lofty watch over the claims of Castilian etiquette, and whom Teresa, therefore does not fail to nickname the *Señora Hospedal*.

of contemplative prayer; and, whilst warning her against anything that might injure her health, he instructed her at the same time in penances of a rather severer type, certainly, than those which were usual in the convent of the Encarnacion. Then he made her practise the Exercises of St. Ignatius, or at least part of them. In short "he led me" she says "in the paths of the love of God and left me liberty with no other restraint than my love imposed upon me."

In 1557 just when Father de Padranos was leaving Avila, Francisco de Borja visited her. The advance he procured for her personal inclination was very striking. He approved entirely of Father Padranos' method except a remnant of "resistance" which he thought had become useless. He stipulated that the act of contemplation should always be prepared for by meditation, pure and simple; but he made the transit easy. "Henceforth" she says, "I should always begin my Prayer with some passage of the Passion; and if afterward our Lord would elevate my Spirit, I should not resist Him, but suffer His Divine Majesty to exalt it; provided that myself should not have any hand in procuring it. . . . And he said, it was an error, to resist so any longer."

These two sources of encouragements, coming so closely together, could not but increase by leaps and bounds that movement which bore Teresa on towards complete abandonment to the higher grades of the prayerful state. She cannot therefore but have felt the more keenly and sadly the kind of shock which

was soon to supervene. Unfortunately¹ those who had thus comforted her went far away from Avila and left her in the clutches of a new "resistance" which was to endure for a very long while. It is time we returned to Father Baltasar Alvarez who now became her confessor.

Here again, as in so many other matters, the Saint explains herself in her *Life* with such frankness and lucidity that one is half discouraged from looking for anything beyond her own writing on the subject. These then, are her words: "He was a person of much discretion, and of great humility; but yet that humility of his cost me many troubles. For, though he were a man of much Prayer, and besides learned, yet put he no trust at all in himself; our Lord not guiding his soul in the same way as mine. . . . For I confessed myself to him above the space of three years,² in great persecutions. . . . I relate this, to the end it may be better understood, how great a trouble it is not to have some person at hand, who hath experience in this way of Spirit."

To be able to understand these quotations fully, we must first of all remember that in 1558 Father Baltasar (born in Old-Castille in 1533) was only twenty-five years old and had just been ordained priest after two years' rather miscellaneous study. The Venerable Luis de la Puente, who wrote his

¹ "Unfortunately"—but with this reservation; that we are always free to see the hand of Providence preparing trials that would further her sanctity. . . .

² She means three consecutive years, and without interruption, but she became his penitent again, with less regularity, for three or four years more.

life, gives us a picture of him in a passage which became even more fragrant in the seventeenth century French of René Gautier's¹ translation. Let us listen to it.

“A few days after the close of the year 1556, they sent him to the college of Avila to finish the two years' study which still remained of his course in theology, at the Jacobin monastery of Santo Tomás; as the Society had not then any masters they sent their scholars to the universities of Salamanca or Alcalá or to the schools and convents of the Jacobins of Valladolid and Avila, where they gave exact and scholarly lessons, as everybody knows. He studied hard for years, with the variation of several occupations; as the college of Avila was newly founded, and he had to attend to several things which were wanted at that time, even in such poor houses. Notwithstanding all this, he made such profitable use of his time that he became one of the best scholars of his term; and although he was not a very profound master of scholastic theology, he repaired this defect by excelling in mysticism, in which he gained from Our Lord as we shall see later, by contemplative prayer, that which cost many long vigils to others; in such a way that he could sufficiently perform all the offices and ministrations with which he was charged, such as confessor, master of studies, Rector Provincial and Visitor; governing and controlling al¹

¹ He deserves to be mentioned and quoted for he was one of the principal patrons of the introduction of the Carmelite nuns into France. Luis de la Puente's book has been translated also by Father Bouix.

kinds of persons, secular and religious, of the Company and outside it; speaking and discoursing, in public and private, of spiritual matters, and with so much excellence, that he was a model of perfection to all who filled the same offices.”¹

“A model of perfection!” He might and ought to have become such certainly, but his biographer has perhaps made the mistake which is still so common: he judged his hero as a whole and did not sufficiently distinguish the different phases in his life. The important fact he adds is that the youthful Father Alvarez had a strong personal tendency to be a man of prayer and of incessant prayerfulness. He even thought once that his superiors were employing him too much in duties which deterred him from this practice; but he recognized—his biographer says it though he would rather not have done so—that this complaint was a fault; therefore he corrected himself of it; in other words, that is, he obeyed. If therefore he made poor St Teresa very unhappy, he shared the unhappiness with her, without telling her of it²; for her repressed himself as much as he repressed her.

This is not merely a conjecture. Teresa first tells us that he too experienced innumerable tribulations, and that without extraordinary support from God it would have been quite impossible for him to

¹ The *Life of Father Baltasar Alvarez* trans. from the Spanish of Father Luis de la Puente by Master René Gautier, a Councillor of the King, in his Council of State. Paris, 1618, chapter i.

² This would have been to expose his superiors and to blame them indirectly.

bear all he had to suffer on her behalf; for however firmly he held her back, against her will, and perhaps against his own, the general opinion was that still he did not hold her back enough. The Venerable Luis de la Puente, a Jesuit also, says categorically (in chapter xiv. of his book) that Father Baltasar "was kept back sixteen years to the ordinary course of meditation, as Mother Teresa was for eighteen years." "Other saints," he adds, "have also had to wait a long time."

We must not forget that we are now among the Jesuits. Now each Order has its own special character and ought to have: it is by remaining faithful to it that it accomplishes its own particular work and mission. We shall do well to recollect this fact when we are tempted to set up comparisons between the one or the other, which are for the most part childish. We must remember that, if they were all forced to resemble each other, the Church would be ill judged in having so many Orders—one would be enough.¹ Now the special function of the Jesuits, taking them collectively, and the noteworthy service they rendered, was the offering, to the immense majority of the faithful, moderate instruction, a system of piety which was lucid, practical and reasonable, and a series of religious exercises to occupy the whole mind and to bring into action all its faculties, whether fixed or with free play. To speak more

¹ One of the results of these diversities is that the character of each Order does not agree with all; but it follows too that each Order, here or there, is the surer of finding what agrees with its own character, and this St Teresa realised clearly.

accurately, the system dear to the Jesuits, and as familiar to them in theory as in practice, was that of meditation, active, discursive, cautious in its selection of bases.

So true is this and so true was it at the time which we are now discussing, that when Father Baltasar gave himself up in course of time to his long resisted tendency towards supernatural prayer, he was suspected afresh. "The Order urgently considered whether this method of prayer was not in contradiction to that of Saint Ignatius." Luis de la Puente tells us more yet: "There were even some who threatened him with the Holy Inquisition; fearing probably that he held some of the errors of the Illuminati they suspected him of condemning the discursive and mediatory methods of prayer in use among the Company and of wishing to lead our Disciples into wandering and dangerous paths." This was indeed a general belief; it had been influential in the martyrdom of Joan of Arc. In Spain, more than anywhere through the sixteenth century, the guardians of orthodoxy scented the Illuminati in almost everything. They feared they had found one in the youthful Ignatius of Loyola, under the pretext that he was far too wise before he had finished his course of study: St Teresa, as we have seen, underwent the same suspicion at Seville. Father Baltasar therefore had to fear an accusation of favouring the sect either personally or in the mind of his penitent. This was the reason, says the Bollandists "that he was perhaps more timid than was right" (*timidior forte quam aequum erat*).

Undoubtedly, when the question came to be examined doctrinally, it had to be clearly recognised that the Society neither denied nor condemned necessarily all that was foreign to its tastes and traditions. But his theoretic concession, accompanied by an easily foreseen observation on the extremely limited number of souls favoured with supernatural gifts, did not in fact prevent the members of the celebrated Society from giving an all but exclusive adherence to their system. Father B. Alvarez was raised later, "to the more than heroic prayer of quiet and union and to perfect and calm contemplation." This impulse for so long restrained rebounded with all the greater force; but his biographer draws a moral from his example. "The extraordinary method of prayer, that is, of silence and quietude, is only granted," he says, "to a very few, after long preparation. . . .; it does not dispense with the other kind on which it is built up. . . . As contemplation is rare, it arises oftenest out of meditation, which teaches and discloses also what things should be asked of God, the claims and rights which ought to be pleaded before Him, the offers to be made to Him, drawing them from the mystery mediated upon; and it is therefore important that some meditation should precede it, in order that the vocal prayer may be attentive and devout; since, if the understanding penetrates all the meaning of the words that it speaks, the result will be the greater. . . . Even those who have risen to this method of the prayer of quiet, need to maintain themselves in the exercise of meditation

when a soul fails in the one it returns to the other as to a place of refuge.”¹

That these maxims are the soul of good sense and truth, it seems absolutely impossible to doubt. St Teresa certainly adopted a good portion of them, both for the use of elect souls given over to lofty contemplations and for herself.² She tries as we have seen to distinguish between *discoursing* and *thinking* on a mystery. Whence then arose the undeniable trial and suffering at the time of her relations with Father Alvarez? First of all we might say it came from the fact that too many people meddle in these matters of conscience: people went and questioned the nun and her confessor and their respective superiors with indiscretion³ which to us is most astounding; they interfered between the two and their superiors. And then too it would seem that her trials were caused by Father Balthasar’s want of long experience and of authority; he had nothing of the breadth of mind of a Francisco de Borja,⁴ but was indeed very pettifogging, very mortifying, very “harsh” to use his penitent’s own expression about him. Finally, and above all, her trials came from his incessant mention of the devil to one so convinced that she had spoken with Jesus

¹ See especially chapter xlii.

² See above, pp. 88, 90.

³ It is explained by the extraordinary interest then taken in religious questions.

⁴ It is surprising, however—and the Bollandists themselves are discreetly surprised—that he did not put more weight on the opinion of St Ignatius’ famous friend: he must have known it.

Himself. On this point she utters a cry which needs no comment.¹

“I understand not those fears, O the Devil, the Devil! When we may say O God, O God. And make those wretches to tremble. For already we know well enough, that the Devil is not able to stir, unless our Lord permit him. What then is the matter now? It is certainly, that I am more afraid of them, who are so frightened with the Devil, than of the Devil himself; for he is utterly unable to do me hurt, whereas those others (especially, if they be Confessors) may put souls to much disquiet; and I have passed some years through so great trouble, that now I am amazed to consider, how I have been able to endure it. But Blessed be our Lord, who hath assisted me in so good earnest !”

It was therefore a great relief to the Saint when her friendship with Pedro d'Alcántara came to be formed. He encouraged her to give herself up freely to her supernatural endowments, he also encouraged her in her desires after mortification and poverty and the return to primitive rules and an absolute trust in Providence. Moreover, he set her the example himself, for he had all his life observed the first rule of St Francis. With what a happy touch she draws the picture of this dignified old man who was so free in his enquiries, so clear in his explanations, so far from timid in his approbation, so positive in his judgments—in a word, of a character so akin to her own. She hails him, then, unhesitatingly as “A great

¹ *Life*, xxv.

master in the spiritual life," and this is how she sums up their intercourse.¹

"This property I ever had to treat with all clarity and truth with them, to whom I imparted my soul; and the more doubtful and suspicious things I still was wont to argue against myself with the strongest reasons I could bring; and I gave him an account of my life, and of my manner of proceeding in Prayer and this with the greatest clarity that I could. Almost at the very first I found that he understood me by experience; which was indeed the only thing whereof I had need at that time; for, then, I could not so well understand these things, at least so far as to express them. For, since that time, it hath pleased our Lord to enable me to understand, and to declare the favours which his Divine Majesty doth me; but formerly it was necessary for me to find one who had passed through the same things himself. . . . Now, this Father gave me very great light and it was much needed by me. . . . He bade me not be troubled, but bless God. . . . He comforted himself very much with me. . . . And finding that I had the self-same desires of those things which he had already put in practice (for indeed, in as much as concerned desires, our Lord had given them to me with great resolution) he took particular contentment to treat with me. . . . He added that there was still much affliction behind, and that there was none in that City who did understand one. . . . He left me with extreme comfort and joy, and directed me to make no doubt at all, but that it was of God."

¹ *Life*, xxx.

Unhappily death came all too soon to interrupt this friendship which had begun so auspiciously, but the great mystic still continued to feel its influence no less. Her relief was still further increased when the new Rector of the Society of Jesus, Father Gaspar de Salazar, who was very different from his predecessor Don Vasquez, gave orders to Father Baltasar "to lead her no more by so strait a path," and then we might say she burst forth into a song of gladness to celebrate the event.

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It was on this same occasion of the foundation of San José that Father Alvarez, who was always too cautious, did so little to second her efforts, so that she resumed her relations with the Order of St. Dominic for a long period of time.

She had already received spiritual help from two of its members on various accounts—these were Father Vincent Baron and Father Luis Bertrand. The latter, as we have seen, had encouraged her by the decided advice he gave her to go forward with her great undertaking. With respect to the former, who had been her father's confessor, he was also hers for a very short time, and the first, one might say, who was worthy of her. He it was who opened her eyes to her inclination to too great security in face of the dangers of certain latitudes allowed in the convent of the Encarnacion, he also recommended her to return to prayer, in short he roused her, as she says, from her slumbers. Very likely too it was he, although she does not give his name whom she met later at Toledo, before her foundations. This time she

was in advance of him, and it was she who led him forward, after having commended him to God in a very special manner. "It hath been usual with me," she writes, "for some years, to this present, that I never see anyone that likes me very well, but instantly I would have him perfectly devoted to God. . . . Just so it befell me, concerning this Religious Man I speak of, (though I judged him a good man, yet that sufficed me not, but I would have him much better) and I said to God in a way, as it were, of rude familiarity; 'O Lord, you must not deny me this favour: see this is a person fit for us to make a friend of.'" Her prayer was heard, for it was not long before she witnessed in him a most surprising and enchanting rate of progress.

We have now, indeed, reached that stage in her life when she was far more useful to the religious growth of her confessors than they were to hers. Father Ribera does not hesitate to affirm it of Father Ybañez; and moreover we have a still more valuable testimony, that of the Saint herself. We saw how he supported her through the storm of opposition which threatened to prevent the foundation of San José. He appreciated her so greatly that he commissioned her to write the history of her spiritual life; and thus it was, under his orders, that in 1561 she composed the first version of her life (which is no longer extant).¹ In the note which accompanied her manuscript she is not afraid to say: "You will see by this narrative what treasure

¹ It was another Dominican, Garcia de Toledo, brother of the Duke of Alva, who bade her write the second.

one gains by giving one's self wholly, as you have begun to do, to Him who gives Himself to us without any reservation whatever."¹ And later, in her second version she says; "I have reason to believe that this communication was most useful to his soul."

This holy friar died in 1565. But his Order had in store for her of whom he had thought so highly, a confessor no less remarkable and quite as ardent a friend, in the person of Father Bañez.

Domingo Bañez was born in 1527 and had entered the Dominicans at Salamanca when he was seventeen. He was a remarkable theologian: we owe to him a Commentary on St Thomas in six folio volumes; and he was made professor of dogmatic theology at the University of Salamanca, while he was confessor to St Teresa. We remember how he helped her at Avila, after the foundation was completed, as his *confrère*, Father Ybañez, had protected her before. This was how their friendship came about. He was her confessor thereafter for six years, and later she kept up a correspondence with him; and she consulted him every time any difficulty arose. Finally, it was he who she admitted "had managed her spiritual affairs for the greatest length of time."

The course of this recital makes us witnesses of a kind of crisis in the spiritual life of the Saint. She was not yet entirely freed from all the doubts of the nature of these supernatural conditions that had been suggested to her from so many sides. She

¹ *Letters*, i. p. 10

did not long so much at that time to search into her own conscience—for she was as sure as possible of herself and her own mental state—but to know whether what passed within her were quite consistent with the Holy Scriptures. It was on this ground, she tells us, that she applied to the theologians of the Order of the blessed St Dominic. Father Bañez was among those who contributed the most largely to reassuring her, and he meant to do it to such an extent that there should be no need to recur to it. He had asked for her “Relations” had read her “Life” and had submitted it to the Holy Office. And now, all was done: there was no further ground for scruples, the opinions of the “learned” were no longer needed, and he instructed her to cease consulting them thenceforth. It was at this juncture that she dreaded on one occasion a reprimand for having sent the manuscript of her Life to Juan de Avila.

It would even seem as though she now went through a kind of reversion, which is moreover quite comprehensible. Just as formerly she used to rebel against those who thought she was the sport of the devil, in the same degree did her humble mind now dread excessive confidence: she felt a kind of shame at the very favourable opinion people had of her. Then it was she wrote (in 1575) those extraordinary lines, the extreme delicacy of which should be properly realised: “In spite of the confirmation of her directors, she never believed, to the extent of acknowledging it by oath, that these things came from God. The results of the great

favours, of which she was the recipient sometimes, seemed indeed to prove it to her. Nevertheless what she never ceased from longing after above all things was virtue. . . ."

However that might be, Father Bañez's confidence and his very order to stop consulting theologians did much to restore calm and self reliance to her. Under the shelter of age (for she was fully twelve years older than the worthy Dominican), her relations with him were on an affectionate footing of kindly familiarity. Not merely did she appear to be thoroughly acquainted with his habits and watch over his health when they were apart, sending him a message, for instance, that if he slept on the ground during a course of sermons in Advent he must at least take the precaution of putting something on his feet; but on his side, too, there were troubles of conscience at times and then the rôles were reversed. She would scold him: "I want very much to talk to you some day over these doubts of yours. You are wasting time over them and are wanting in humility not to listen to me. Father Melchior is more tractable than you are."¹

But she was soon to gain more and more strength in playing this part of the mother. The reformation of the Carmelite Order gave her more than the opportunity for its exercise.

The first who was both son and father to her at the same time was Juan de la Cruz. We recollect that she had cut out and sewed his first habit of a

¹ *Letters*, i. 219 and 130.

reformed Carmelite with her own hands. There was a rivalry between them during their successive meetings as to who should kneel to the other for blessing. Their equality was sealed by those mutual states of rapt ecstasy in which the nuns would come upon them, one on one side and the other on the other of the *grille* of the parlour in the convent of the Encarnacion. Therefore she could write, in 1578, to some of her Carmelite nuns: "Look upon him as my second self." She was never tired of sounding this man's praise. . . . "Small in stature but great before God"—she had "tested him," but never discovered "any flaws" in him. He was truly "the father of her soul. . . ." ¹ "You could not believe" she says, "how lonely his absence makes me feel." She could not understand why he was not appreciated more by others. "I am much amused, my daughters (she was writing to Ana de Jesus) that you should have come to grumble with so little cause, since you had with you a man of such heavenly goodness, my father Juan de la Cruz." And again elsewhere: "I cannot understand this unfortunate state of things, but no one seems to bear this holy man in mind; there would be few like him left to us, if he were to die." ²

But by God's goodness there was left to her Father Gracian, the comrade of her struggles and later of her disgrace in the eyes of men.

We have seen the important part he took in the

¹ It was indeed of him that she said it!

² *Letters*, ii. 304 and 275.

heroic enterprise of the reformation of the Carmelite Friars and in the terrible struggle that accompanied it. It is superfluous to go over those incidents again; but it is of supreme interest for gaining knowledge of the soul we are studying, to explore this memorable friendship here, in her company and by the light of her own writings. It was supernatural in its origin and in its ending; it was, we may rightly hold, natural too in many of those emotions, by turns strong and tender, which stirred not exactly the feelings, but—we can call it by no other name—the heart of the Saint. We must go to the stories of St Francis of Sales and St Chantal to find its parallel.

It was the Carmelite nuns of Pastrana who, becoming acquainted with him first, had prayed earnestly and successfully for his entrance into the Reformed Order of Carmelites. Their foundress was very pleased about it, for she had recognized instantly the great worth of this theologian, savant and man of action, of this orator of precocious genius. Distressed as she was by the errors of some and the obstinacy of others, exhausted in her aged limbs but ever vigorous in that valiant spirit of hers, feeling at the same time an increase both in her Apostolic zeal and her powerlessness to satisfy it by her individual efforts, she exulted to find determination and gentleness, that is, calmness, in the help providentially sent her. Finally there is no objection against holding that she had for him that peculiar feeling which mothers feel with respect to their sons and which is not the same, although their affection is quite as

great, as that felt for their daughters. There is no need to go further—we have said enough.

It is of greater importance to state that the celebrated vow of obedience to Father Gracian, which she took in 1575, preceded and hastened their intimacy; it did not spring from it. She gives us the account herself of how the idea was sent her in a vision. In spite of this she held back, and only made up her mind after great heart searchings; she finally decided that as she had not sufficiently paid her debt to the Holy Spirit she would acquit herself in His eyes by this supreme sacrifice; and she is careful to add: "I was not thinking at the time of the affection I had for Father Gracian, nor of those qualities which he possessed which help my soul, but on the contrary I looked upon him as a stranger."

Very soon she applied all her intelligence to measuring the extent of her vow, and understanding what it involved and did not involve. Far from seeing her liberty curtailed, she felt it renewed with a vigour which was besides favourable to the perfection of an understanding which was replete with confidence. "The (former) liberty which she enjoyed," she tells us two years after (in 1577), "was a source of torment to her; on the contrary she preferred the subjection in which she then was placed. She found indeed someone who helped her to lead souls to the Lord."

But this union of two souls has another side to it. She had vowed to obey the young Father in all vital questions, and she was very persistent in

passing over the ruling of the monasteries to him. But anything connected with his own life, his temporal affairs or the care of his reputation, in all instances, in fact, where he needed counsel to be prudent, then, forewarned as she was of various dangers, she reasserted herself, her matchless experience coming to the aid of her passionate devotion. We almost feel tempted to say at times that she only gave over her authority to him, in order to have more leisure to attend to his concerns. She on her side managed to prevent this part of mother and counsellor being incompatible with the terms of her vow. In the first days of their acquaintance he had put before her a writing which he had composed during the strongest temptations of his youth. "I know," she said to her daughters (in her *Book of Foundations*) "that neither to his Confessor, nor to any other person, this Father hath discovered so much. Sometimes he had occasion to think, that I might have some experience in such things, both from my many years, and what he hath heard of me." So, eventually, she makes it her business to point out to him all those pitfalls from which he ought to turn aside. He must beware of those nuns who, when they want a thing too passionately, put a thousand before you to gain their end. He should not remain too long in Andalusia, which was a dangerous country, and Father Juan de la Cruz had good reason for not liking it. He should oftener give her news of his doings and in greater detail: "Love, where love is, does not sleep so long." One day he signed his

letter "Your beloved son"! Then indeed she thanks him, and in fitting fashion. "Instantly, I cried out, because I was alone; 'He is right!'"

"Because she was alone"—these are her words. For, indeed, she knew and pointed out with that directness and transparency which she loved to have in everything, that many of their mutual confidences had to be kept secret lest they should be interpreted wrongly and set a pernicious example. "I know," she says, "with whom I am dealing, and my age makes it allowable, but whatever the sisters might hear me say or see me do, they would fancy they might do also, and they would be right. . . . Your Reverence and I are weighted with too heavy a load, and we have to give account of our conduct before God and before men."

Such was the character of the Saint's last friend; who was, like herself and even to a still greater extent perhaps, destined for trial and very nearly to martyrdom. He was the last of those who exercised upon her soul an influence worthy of her. It is not to be denied that towards the close of her life she held, in spite of herself, what we might almost call a feeling of resentment or at all events a recollection in which esteem was tempered and mixed with a certain amount of impatience, of the method Father Baltasar had employed with her in her young days. She was cognizant of the great merit of the Jesuits she saw around her, and was ready to do and even did all that she could for them, of her own accord and most heartily, especially when she knew they

were in any difficulty; on the other hand she believed that it behoved her to handle them cautiously in consideration of the suspicions which she knew they held about her. . . Can it be denied that these shades and others no less delicate are to be found in the passages of a letter which has been translated recently, written in 1576 to Maria de San José? . . . "The Fathers of the Society of Jesus are filled with amazement at sight of our austere style of life.¹ . . . It would be a good thing, in spite of what you say, for you to have some Father of the Society to confess you from time to time: such a proceeding will contribute greatly to lighten the fear they have of us. May God forgive them!" Two months after, the negotiation seemed likely to be concluded, but it remains to be seen how either side will behave. "These Fathers" (it is written to the same prioress) "like to be obeyed. That is what I beg you to do. And if what they order is not always for the best, we must forgive it them because of the need we have of their co-operation. Search for anything you care to ask them, for they love being consulted. When they undertake a thing, they are right to discharge it properly. They act in this manner whenever they undertake any work."

She did not always keep to these fine allusions and delicate hints. When Father Gaspar de Salazar formed the project of leaving the Society of Jesus to join the Reformed Carmelites, because he was

¹ It is not impossible that there are still some of them of the same opinion in our own days.

being persecuted, their protests were loud, and for a time they almost seemed on the point of laying the blame on the Mother herself—or imploring her mediation against the turncoat. Then, being put on the defensive, she took a sharper tone, and gave them to understand, with some pride—if I may be allowed the expression—that *she* was not in the habit of interfering with what did not concern her. . . . She did not lose this opportunity of saying to the Provincial to whom she wrote (10th February 1578): “May it please His Majesty that the servants of the Son and the servants of the Mother shall ever show themselves soldiers of great courage, and seek only to follow our King’s standard in order to carry out his desires! If we, children of Carmel, truly walk in this way, it is certain that those who bear the name of Jesus cannot be estranged from us, *as I am so often threatened will be the case.*”

And then can we be surprised that three years later, in 1581, two years before her death, she wishes that by cautious management certain of the Convents should contrive to have other confessors than the Jesuits,¹ in order to “be rid of them?”

From these passages—it is useless to be blind to them—what conclusion shall we draw? To speak plainly, this: that the moderate course so studiously calculated, so clever, so skilful and so practical, employed by the Society, was apparently not suited to everybody’s needs. St Teresa probably, and

¹ See *Letters*, iii., 193.

indeed certainly, would have recommended it to a vast number of souls, had she not been so taken up with spiritual interests of another kind. But decidedly we can say she died without having forgotten the little grievances which, whether rightly or wrongly, she believed she personally had against the brothers of Father Alvarez.¹

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If she had lived in the world she would have played a leading part in the history of her family. The influence she exercised over it from the seclusion of her cell is remarkable, and was always beneficial. She recognised her duty towards her relatives, first of all of gratitude, and also as their guardian. She made it her business to see after their portions and their worldly troubles; and laboured to gather in for them the sums of money they had advanced. She advised them even in the minutest things. But with what design? On purpose to ensure that everything should be done fairly, and secondly—she does not disguise the fact—in order to maintain, for them and for their children (whose cause she pleads sometimes with maternal partiality)—that “repute” which she held it to be necessary not to compromise from any point of view. She went no further in temporal matters, not considering it her province, and if she was more confidential and unreserved with her brother Lorenzo it was because she could talk

¹ Were their methods, perhaps, becoming too Italian for her liking?

as freely as she would with him of God and holy matters.

By this standard it was that she dealt out, to a certain degree, the measure of confidence and friendship which she held for her various friends. In Maria Briceño she found a gentle devotion, in Maria Diaz a courageous and simple piety, qualities which were very useful to her. Two classes of friendship she had among her Carmels, which were dear to her on various grounds; on the one hand was the good lay sister Ana de San Bartolomé, her visible Providence in sickness and fatigue, her inseparable companion, whom she cured by a single touch when she in her turn had need of attention; and on the other hand were the managing Ana de Jesus and the invincible Maria de San José¹—two women with clear brains, who, while both of less charm and gentleness, all but equalled her in breadth of mind and strength of will.

In these two she found, far more pronounced than in her own character, that quality of—how shall we put it?—femininism (to use a word which is understood by all nowadays) that one meets often enough in nuns, even in Carmelites: for both seem to have taken pretty vigorous precautions against the confessors who did not please them. St Teresa mentions some of these precautions without perhaps

¹ The former was the great pioneer of the Carmelites in France and the Low Countries. The latter, who died prioress at Lisbon, was the author of an admirable *Instruction on the Manner of governing Nuns* (partially translated by Father Bouix in his edition of the Letters of St Teresa).

exactly praising them, but certainly without blaming them.¹

When writing to these two women, she felt in the conscious presence of strong spirits and treated them accordingly: there was nothing faint, either in the praise and the marks of friendship or in the reproaches which she addressed to them. She could have said the same to both as indeed she wrote to one of them: "My daughter and my crown, I never cease returning thanks to God for the blessing he has vouchsafed me in bringing your Reverence to our Order." To one of the two, however, she was more strongly drawn than to the other: she did not conceal it; as little did she conceal the fact that she had at times to suffer for the preference. That one was Maria de San José.

Hearing once of the illness of this prioress the foundress wrote to Father Gracian: "If she were to die, we should lose in her the best member of our Order. As for the mistakes she has committed, she has so far corrected them, it is clear, that for the future she will never act but wisely. I love her much. Do not forget to commend her earnestly to God. The Convent of Seville would in a great measure be lost, supposing that we lost her." This is a summary of the Saint's feeling. But we will give a translation taken from writings which were addressed directly to the person interested, as thereby we get, to some extent, woman speaking to woman. "Your letters have given me such delight

¹ See *Letters*, ii., p. 75. (Father Grégoire de Saint Joseph's edition) and in Father Bouix's edition, vol. ii., p. 522.

that I was much touched by them, but all that forgiveness you beg me to grant only makes me laugh. If you love me as much as I love you, I forgive you all the past and even the future." And in another letter she says again to her: "I do not know how it is I love you so much."

We must enquire what there had been in the past and was to be in the future which had so much need of forgiveness. We will leave on one side a slight difference of opinion which arose over the keeping on or abandoning of a house in Seville. Both had made up their minds most definitely on opposing sides. One thought the house was unhealthy and wished to change it. The other wished them to stay where they were, because they had there a beautiful garden and a fine view. "I wrote her," she said, "terrible letters; it was just as though I had struck on an anvil." But the real root of the matter was this: St Teresa was dealing on this occasion with one twenty years younger than herself; thus a truly maternal love was added to that of a soul which was always as eager to be loved as to love, equally eager after plain speaking and absence of restriction. But Maria de San José, although most extraordinarily gifted, was not the equal of the foundress in this direction: and what Teresa, therefore, most reproached her with, was her excess of reserve. Perhaps, indeed, the great Saint fell a victim in this matter to the intense respect and admiration which even in her lifetime was inspired by the mysterious gifts and virtues she possessed. But that again was a thought which

could never even occur to her mind, and her regret caused by this naïve ignorance gives a still greater charm to her complaint.¹

¹ In making no secret of our heroine's disagreements with a few Jesuits, has it been my aim to protract a kind of antagonism between one party of the Carmelites and the Society? God forbid! A Carmelite Mother Superior writes to me that, in her Order, "Souls led by more particularly spiritual paths find confession among the Jesuits as trustworthy and as broad-minded" as they could desire. I do not doubt it. At most I will point out that St Teresa's experience and the precepts derived from her complaints must have been of use to the successors of Father Alvarez. Saints are sent to give lessons. They do not give them only to those who are not Saints; they give them to each other, and profit by them more than anyone.

On the relation between St Teresa and her family, I owe the following unpublished fragment, which comes from Quito, to Father Grégoire de Saint-Joseph. These are the moving terms in which the Saint reminded her nephew, the son of Don Lorenzo, who was going to be married in the Indies, of an illegitimate child of his, a girl, of whom she, it appears, had taken charge.

"God's mercy is great in that you have been enabled to make so good a choice and to marry so soon, for you began to be dissipated so young that we might have had much sorrow on your account. From that I see how much I love you. Of a truth, I am deeply grieved at the offence which has been committed against God; but when I see how like this child is to you, I cannot but welcome her and love her dearly. It is astonishing how, mere baby that she is, she recalls the patience of Teresa. May God be pleased to make of her His handmaid! for it is not she that is to blame; and so you must do everything to have her well brought up: when she is older, she must not be left where she is: she will be better with her aunt; we will wait to see what God wills to do with her. You can send me here a certain sum of money, which could be invested, and the income will serve to maintain her. Indeed she deserves it, for she is very good. There would be no need for you to send me money for her, if this convent did not happen to be in very truth in the greatest poverty."

CHAPTER XI

LAST DAYS—HER WILL—HER DEATH—
HER LEGACY

HER last days had in store for her a worse trouble than most of those which had overwhelmed her, and yet this particular trouble we only know of from other people; for it was of a nature to be sadly aggravated by complaining. She had been staying at Valladolid where her niece Maria Bantista was prioress. Don Lorenzo was dead and his will was contested. The Saint wanted to retire from these proceedings: they were repugnant to her, and she considered that none of the parties were adopting an irreproachable attitude. She was however compelled to give her opinion, and by so doing she met with the most distressing opposition. That she should be insulted by a lawyer in spite of her great age, she could still bear, and she contented herself with replying gently to him: "May God return you, Sir, the favour that you show to me!" But that her niece the prioress, who had hitherto always been such a model of humility and faithfulness and obedience, should take sides against her with a frigid and at the same time passionate obstinacy, and show her, not to mince matters, to the door of her convent; what more ignominious cross could

she have left to bear? Was it not nigh time to die? ¹

She did not however intend that the nuns of the house should be deprived of her farewell words which they had richly earned, and with truly sublime calmness she wrote to them :

“My daughters I am greatly comforted in leaving this house by the degree of perfection reached, by the poverty I observe kept in it and by the love you have one to another.

“Do not fulfil your exercises by rote; but do noble deeds which shall grow better and better every day.

“Be diligent to have noble desires; very precious fruit is gathered from them even when they cannot be carried out.”

This was her spiritual will and testament; and it was worthy of such a life as hers!

She had already addressed her *Nunc dimittis* to Maria de San José. “I earnestly entreat you and your daughters not to wish for me to live longer nor to pray that I may. Ask on the contrary that I may go to my eternal rest; for I can be of no more use to you.” Her vow was not long in being granted; for she was then at the age at which she had long foreseen her “exile” was to have an end.

¹ The Carmelite nun of Caen considerably extenuates this painful scene in the telling, as we can perfectly understand she should. The Bollandists translated Ana de San Bartolomé's account of it unhesitatingly. I will give it in her own Latin: “Edixit nobis ut suo coenobio abiremus. Quod ubi facere caeperamus, prope ostium veste me apprehendens: Abite, ait, nec amplius huc revertamini.”

After founding the house at Burgos, she would have liked to return to Avila. She was Prioress there, and there she was to have given the veil to her brother's daughter, who was also destined to be named Teresa de Jesus: it would have been a comfort to her at last to die in her own beloved town. But at Medina del Campo she met with Father Antonio de Jesus. This worthy man had not yet altogether ceased to put the Saint's patience to the test. He came to take her to Alba Tormes where the Duchess Doña Maria Henriquez was expecting her. By a supreme effort of obedience she resigned her wish, and set out for Alba without having received "any provision for the journey" from her niece. She was so ill that she fainted on the way: they could not even find an egg in the village through which they were passing, to revive her in her weakness. They could only offer her some dry figs, on which she said to them: "Do not be distressed, my daughters, many poor people have not as much even as that." And on the next stage of their journey they could not give her more than a few greens boiled in onions. But at length she reached the end of her journey, and went to bed terribly exhausted.

Notwithstanding her weariness she rose as usual the following morning, inspected the convent and communicated; she went on thus for several days. But on Michaelmas Eve she was attacked by hemorrhage and went to bed never to rise from it again.

Had Murillo, the great painter of her country, been able to reproduce that death-bed scene, he

would no doubt have laid emphasis, as was his way, on the moving contrast between certain details borrowed from what actually took place and a mysterious glorification which could not have failed to shed its sublime radiance over all. Father Antonio de Jesus attended the dying; he administered the last Sacraments and thought it right to ask her where she wished to be buried. "Which question," says Ribera, "as far as could be gathered from her looks, displeased her," certainly not because it called up before her any sorrowful pictures, but because it appeared to attach some importance to her burial. "Is it indeed for me," she answered, "to be taken up with such matters, and will no one give me somewhere a corner of earth to be laid in out of charity?" When the faithful Ana de San Bartolomé was left alone with the Mother for a few moments, she gathered from her these few words: "Daughter, the hour of my death is come." Therefore she would not leave Teresa's bedside, until Father Antonio forced her to go and take some food; she was gone but a very short time, but the dying eyes searched uneasily for her to right and left, and, on being questioned, she signed that it was for Ana's return she craved.

Knowing how the Mother had always loved cleanliness, the good nurse had desired to ease for the last time the sufferings of her exhausted body, which the doctors had just tortured vainly by cupping. She had brought her a change of linen and changed everything even to her cap and ruffles. The Saint had thanked her by a sweet smile; then she lay

back in her arms, which she never left till she was dead.

These last farewells to earth and to one of the sweetest friendships of this life had not hindered her impatient love from its burning desire to be united with her God for Eternity. We read in Ribera's account: "As soon as she saw the Holy Sacrament approach within her Chamber-door; though, before, she was so exceedingly debilitated, and decayed in her health, and so oppressed with the pains of her disease, that she could not move out of her place, she with violence, none helping her, courageously got up, as though she would have leapt out of bed, and must have bin held: her face began to shine with an unusual beauty, darting forth resplendent rayes, carrying a venerable kind of majesty with it likewise, and seeming not of the same age she was of, but much younger. She placed herself in an attitude of adoration with clasped hands."

Then it was she uttered that cry of faith, hope and love, one of the grandest that have ever been uttered on earth: "Oh my Lord, now is the time, that we may see each other!"

In spite of the vision in which she was already enjoying her reward, she made a point of declaring herself once more an obedient daughter of the Church, of asking forgiveness for her sins and, devoted as she always was to the great passages of Scripture, of reciting the *Miserere*. The last day she remained in peaceful and profound prayerfulness and never moved. "And when she now

approached," says Ribera, "to the last period of her life, one of the nuns, viewing her more accurately, thought she observed in her certain signs of our Saviour his talking to her, and showing her strange things: for, the holy Mother discovered evident marks of one wondering at the things she saw."

This was her last ecstasy, and she died on Thursday the 4th October, 1582, at nine in the evening. She was sixty-seven years and six months and one week in age, and had spent forty-nine years in the religious life, twenty-nine in the Encarnacion and twenty in the Reformed Order.

The new Calendar, which leaves out ten days, moved the anniversary of her death and consequently her festival to the 15th October.

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She left behind her a goodly heritage. First and foremost the remembrance of her life! For thereby she had revealed to the human race, as perhaps none had since the death of Christ, all the love that the soul which has been given to us is capable of holding of love, and the strength with which it can raise itself into intimate relations with the Eternal Ideal.

If we search for her forerunners and ancestors in the order of nature we need not fear for a moment to look too high. By her profound intellect she is akin to those great geniuses in pagan times who had saved the idea of pure mind and of pure love and of disinterested contemplation, the Socrates' and Platos and Aristotles. Some might find fault with us for thus placing the sublime philosophers in her company. Not so did Arnauld who translated her works,

nor Descartes who penned that beautiful letter, so seldom quoted, upon the love of God. Not Malebranche, who found inspiration from her; nor Leibnitz, who wrote, in 1696, to Morelli: "You do well to appreciate the writings of St Teresa. I found this fine thought in them: The soul of man should look upon things as though in the whole world there was but itself and God. That is an idea which has been of great use to me in my philosophical researches, and I have turned it to good account in my hypotheses."

They were not mere hypotheses which Teresa left to us; for never had the eye of faith penetrated the supernatural world with so much discernment; never had love made so living a reality of the invincible world. She loved the dead Jesus as Mary Magdalene had loved Him during his life: with just as much compassion and devotion, just as much humility and trust. She loved Him in His essential union with the infinite, as in His Redeeming Humanity, thus uniting what the too purely sensuous devotions of some, and still more the too abstract intelligence of others, often unfortunately separate.

All this she has preserved in her writings—not merely the traces and the remembrance of it, but the lively and inspiring feeling. The gifts which adorn her richly endowed nature are clearly perceptible in them all: deep sympathy and the power of criticising everything with strict accuracy, precision in her reading of, and her emotional communication with, the supernatural, a light-heartedness in her love of pain, subtlety and enthusiasm, common sense and

sublimity. But, it is most interesting, also, to trace the action of years and influence of events in the particular development of each of these gifts.

A glowing spirit of youthfulness still bubbles over in her *Life*, harassed by piously exaggerated repentances and by a thirst after love that nothing on earth can ever quench: she lets herself go and watches over herself, she analyses herself and worships: she talks of herself and of her God as of two friends who knew each other intimately and could rely on one another; she dwells with some satisfaction upon the beauties of souls and even on those of nature, but only on condition of ever finding means therein of rising again surely and swiftly towards the infinite perfection.

In the book of *Foundations* we meet a mother who likes, for the comfort of her daughters, to relate events of an edifying character. She does not restrain herself, she loves to revive them from time to time by pithy reflections and by fascinating and clever anecdotes.

In the *Way of Perfection* the dominating note is the lucidity of practical maxims illuminated by the consciousness of a high calling, by experience and by the most discerning judgment in matters of piety.

In the *Castle Interior* there speaks a divine of the Church, less bent however on dogmatizing and refuting and fighting, than on making the reader embrace in one calm glance the ascending scale of those states, the mysteries of which, without ceasing to be awe-inspiring and disturbing, had become so familiar to her.

Finally in the *Correspondence* we find all these shades in succession but dominated by the natural note of a personality which has to confront a myriad of anxieties, and, without hesitation or delay, without hunting about after schemings or bypaths, speaks to each one as the need of the hour demands, not to say the need of the very moment at which she is writing. She would have liked all her daughters to write to her in the same way as she wrote to them: "Sister San Francisco's letter," she says on one occasion, "shows how little she has of humility and obedience . . . She ought not to enlarge or exaggerate in her letters; she thinks her circumlocutions are not untruths, but her style is very far from that state of perfection which permits nothing but plain-spokenness." She herself, indeed, had attained this perfection, as she had attained all other kinds. She realised that we have to live on this earth, and that we must adapt ourselves to the necessary limitations that it has pleased Providence to place upon us: she knew moreover the nature of man, and, finally, she had charge of convents which could not have existed, in a sense, without her; therefore she never thought it beneath her to teach anything that she judged to be expedient, right or unavoidable. The grateful, gracious and sensible womanliness, which she ever preserved even in the smallest details of life, is revealed at every turn, in an incident, in the end of a paragraph, in a postscript; in these words rapidly dashed off she seizes on the little hidden touches of self-deception, divines the weak spots, or softens a reproach. She carries us away in her train from

pity to scorn, from scorn to indignation and to revelations of quite biblical sublimity. On the other hand she will readily break off in the middle of the highest considerations and most solemn counsels to give, to ask for, to convey, a detail, a pleasant reference to the face or stout figure of one of the sisters, or a practical suggestion about the oven in the convent kitchen. This constant and facile change from one mood to another is precisely what makes the pre-eminent originality of this correspondence, which has happily been recently completed. That which in another would have been a disconcerting contradiction, in Teresa is so easily reconciled that the reader has scarcely time to be surprised, to such a degree does the strength from which this ease arises succeed in making him forget it!

Finally she has left behind her an inheritance in that Reformed Carmelite Order which still continues at all points of the compass to protect souls who desire, in their Mother's most fitting words, to hold high the banner of the life of abnegation and sacrifice and everlasting hope. In order that some of that healthy perfume may be ever spread about this world, ever bent, as it is, on the pleasure of the moment and on forgetfulness, must there not be much, as it were, compressed, in a small number of elect spirits with a specially privileged calling? And is it not true that a people which condemns them to exile is, alas! a people that disgraces itself and brings its own dissolution? How many activities would have been still further enervated by mistrust of self and of God, how many desires after holiness

would have recoiled still further before difficulties wrongly held to be insurmountable, and, on the other hand, how many pious souls would have gone still further astray in puerile or vainglorious dreamings, if the figure of the great Carmelite were not there to strengthen some, to soften others, to calm the impatient and uplift the humble, to teach, in fact, to all what the resources are of a soul, which, although it has renounced false pleasures, has not on that account—indeed far from it!—renounced any true gift or well-being! Therefore it is that so many impulses and prayers go forth to her who has done so much honour to our nature that Father Bañez could say of her in words as expressive as true: “She is great from head to foot, but the influence that radiates from her is incomparably greater still!”

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